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THE REAL LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

VOL. II

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From an engraving after the picture by Vanloo

Louis XV

THE REAL LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

By Lieut.-Colonel ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, D.S.O. Author of "Sidelights on the Court of France," "Louis XIV. in Court and Camp," "The Regent of the Roués," etc.

WITH 34 FULL-PAGE PORTRAITS . .
INCLUDING 2 PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES

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THE REAL LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

CHAPTER I

A Dissolute King and his Daughters

1748—1749

In the year 1749—that is, in the year after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had disgracefully ended for France the long War of the Austrian Succession—Madame de Pompadour practically occupied the position of First Minister to Louis XV.

When Madame de Châteauroux died, her sister the Duchesse de Lauraguais lost her credit. She had served very well as an adjunct to her sister in the *petits cabinets* of the dissolute King; but once the *bourgeoise* Madame d'Étioles had occupied those *petits cabinets*, had deserted her husband and surviving child to become Marquise de Pompadour, the reign of Madame de Lauraguais was ended.

Five years later, while the charms of Pompadour, already, owing to her ill-health, waning at twenty-nine, failed to please the King, he had renounced the part of a warrior Prince for ever; while she maintained her

position merely by conniving at his vices, at the same time that she controlled the King by keeping the affairs of the State to a great extent in her own hands.

Owing to the inordinate affection of the King for Madame Henriette, his eldest daughter at Versailles, Pompadour had a very difficult part to play. For behind the placid and too obedient Henriette was the fat, unwieldy Dauphin, and behind the Dauphin the Jesuit party. They pushed Henriette, who was twenty-one in 1748, to yield in all matters to the King's wishes; while her father, but seventeen years older than herself, was in that year ruining not only the moral nature of Henriette, but that of her next sister the turbulent Adélaïde, full of the sparkle and fire of her mother's Polish race. Having quitted the army for ever at the age of thirty-eight, having become sickened of work and the affairs of the State owing to the devices of Madame de Pompadour, the King had indeed fallen very low. Greedy of money, he speculated in wheat at a time when the people were starving, speculated on a surety, since his co-speculators held the wheat reserves, merely to increase the ready money wherewith to indulge at Versailles and at Choisy in his vices to his heart's content. At night, in this year of the peace, he commenced his infamous habit of shutting himself up with his daughters and causing them to become intoxicated with himself. Since it was a known fact that when Louis XV. became drunk he also became absolutely ignorant of what he did, perfectly oblivious too on the following morning as to what might have occurred, there is in connection with these nightly suppers a considerable matter for surmise.

It seems almost inexplicable that the Dauphin, who

From the painting by Nattier. Copyright, W. Mansell & Co.

A DAUGHTER OF LOUIS XV.
As a Vestal.

had so much power over the minds of his sisters and who was pious, or at all events bigoted, should not have attempted to save them. He, however, in no way interfered, merely making use of his sisters to obtain his own ends, which were those of the Church. That the suppers took place frequently and that the King had nobody present at them but his daughters is vouched for by that great friend of the Queen, and most moderate and reticent of chroniclers, the Duc de Luynes, in two places in his voluminous journals—on December 22nd, 1749, and November 12th, 1750. Madame du Hausset, the waiting-lady of Madame de Pompadour, also relates a circumstance which took place at Choisy in connection with Madame d'Estrades, which shows how completely oblivious Louis the Well-Beloved was, when sober, of what he had been capable when he had imbibed too freely of the wines of Champagne.

The Dauphin and the clergy of ultramontane tendencies, those who upheld the Bull *Unigenitus*, were not more bitterly opposed to the Jansenists, who resisted that Bull, than they were to Madame de Pompadour. Thus, with the casuistry of that day, they shut their eyes to the evils which distressed the Queen, but which the King took no pains to hide, since, through Henriette at first and later through Adélaïde, they could work upon the King against Pompadour, against the Jansenists, and, above all, against M. de Machault, the Minister of Finance, when he sought to tax the enormous wealth of the clergy.

To show how little the King sought to hide his freaks and fancies, it is only necessary to refer once more to the journal of the Duc de Luynes. He relates how, occasionally having supped without his daughters after

returning from the chase, Louis would suddenly insist upon seeing them, no matter in what condition of attire they might be. In those days a lady might as well have been undressed altogether as to appear in public without her *panier*—the rules of fashion were inexorable.

At the château of Choisy, the home of dissoluteness and unconstraint, to which it was the custom of Louis to invite five or six ladies at a time without their husbands, these rules did not obtain. In a household where it was customary for the host to visit each of his fair guests in turn before they had arisen every morning, it was naturally a matter of indifference if those sirens lolled round the apartments in loose floating robes analogous to the teagowns of the present day. But at Versailles, the home of strict etiquette, of continued ceremony, no woman could be seen thus without disgrace.

Nevertheless, Louis would send for the two Princesses to come to him at night from their apartments without waiting to dress themselves properly. No doubt that Henriette, and Adélaïde, not yet sixteen years old, even if their feelings became blunted, suffered at the scandal they created. Nevertheless, in obedience to the commands which had reached them from the *petits cabinets*, they were compelled, all *paner*-less, to traverse long corridors and stately apartments, to pass before the eyes of pitying Court domestics and horrified, if bowing, nobles and ladies, to join their inconsiderate and half-intoxicated parent and share his revels late into the night.

Of these King's daughters, it is probable that if any other shame were felt than that caused by appearing in public *en déshabillé*, it was only by Henriette, the elder. As for Adélaïde, she from her earliest childhood worshipped her father, whom she maintained to be the

handsomest man living, and as she grew older plainly showed that she considered that the Royal Family were permitted a moral code of their own, which did not resemble that established for the family relations of the rest of the world.

While Henriette reaped the reward for her obedience in being granted a Royal state and Household, a magnificent set of apartments and an income double as large as that of Pompadour, the retiring Queen was totally eclipsed. Neglected in her corner, with a few devoted adherents, such as the Duc and Duchesse de Luynes, the Cardinal de Luynes, Archbishop of Bayeux, the President Hénault, and the Père Griffet, Marie Lesczynska passed her evenings amid the sleepiness of her guests. After some game, some discussion concerning books of devotion or the scandals of the Court, the conversation would lag and a silence ensue, only to be first broken by the snores of the Duc de Luynes, whom the Queen nicknamed Tintamarre, soon to be followed by those of his brother the Cardinal.

Upon one occasion the latter, suddenly awakening, exclaimed, "It is time to assemble the Chapter!"—a speech which Her Majesty did not forget to write and tease him about when he returned to his diocese, good-humouredly adding that he was "most amiable," especially when he was "not peaceably sleeping with Tintamarre."

With her daughters, as they grew up successively, Queen Marie Lesczynska had but little in common save the interests of the Church and those of the Spanish Bourbons—their cousins in Spain, Naples, and Parma. Philip V. of Spain, the first French Monarch of that country, had died in 1746 after reigning for forty-six

troubled years at Madrid. His eldest surviving son, Ferdinand VI., was now upon the throne. The intrigues of the ambitious second wife of Philip (who had been uncle to Louis XV.) had obtained for her son Don Carlos the throne of Naples and Sicily in 1735, while, by the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, Elizabeth Farnese had seen her second son Philip installed as ruler of the Italian duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla. This Infante, Don Philip, was married to Louise Élisabeth de France, the eldest daughter of Louis XV. Not quite a year older than Madame Henriette, the Infanta was but sixteen years younger than her father, with whom, under the tutelage of Queen Elizabeth Farnese, she had, from interested motives, kept up the most gushing weekly correspondence from Madrid. The long political reign of Elizabeth being now over, her stepson Ferdinand, who was married to a plain but sensible and amiable Portuguese Princess, having compelled the Queen-dowager to retire from the Court, the Austrian war having, moreover, been ended, by France accepting merely Parma instead of the hoped-for Tuscany and Lombardy for Louis' son-in-law Philip, the Infanta resolved to come to France. She had nothing more to gain by remaining at Madrid, and her husband Philip had gone to Parma, whither she wished to avoid following him for as long as possible. The Infanta accordingly set out for Versailles from Spain, where she was no longer welcome, being determined if possible to supplant Mesdames Henriette and Adélaïde in their father's affections.

In addition to the Infanta, now Duchess of Parma, there was already a Spanish Princess, indeed a Spanish Queen, of French birth, installed in France; this was Mademoiselle de Montpensier. Louise, fourth daughter

From an engraving after the picture by Klein.

MARIE THÉRÈSE OF SPAIN,
The first wife of the Dauphin.

of Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, the Regent, was married during the Regency to Louis, Prince of the Asturias, elder brother of Ferdinand VI.

In furtherance of certain schemes of Queen Elizabeth Farnese, stepmother of these Princes, her husband for a time had abdicated the throne of Spain, expecting, owing to the weak health of his nephew Louis XV., to be able to replace it by the monarchy of France. During this abdication, which lasted eight months, Louis, Prince of the Asturias, became King of Spain. He then died, his father resumed the Spanish throne, and the daughter of the Duc d'Orléans, who had been cruelly treated and vilified by her mother-in-law, was glad to turn her back upon Madrid for ever, and return to the Palais-Royal. As this young Princess never had any political significance after her return, it is only necessary to mention her to show how she formed an additional link between the Royal Families of France and Spain.

In addition to this link with the Peninsula, the Dauphin was married to a Spanish Infanta as first wife. For a time, however, the friendship between the two countries had been very severely strained. This tension had come into being when as a young child an Infanta was for a year or two at Versailles as the prospective wife of the then boy Louis XV., but was sent back ignominiously to Spain in the year 1725. There then very nearly ensued war with Spain, but, after a few incursions of Spanish troops, sent over the border by the indignant Elizabeth Farnese, the quarrel ended in smoke.

This Italian Princess, who before becoming Queen of Spain was merely the unimportant niece of the last Duke of Parma, was always ready to threaten war against that France which was her best friend. One

war she actually brought about in 1719, during the days of the Regent, and it ended disastrously for Spain, very rapidly. One of her last actions of this kind had taken place shortly before the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, when the Dauphin's first wife, one of her daughters, had died. Then she threatened Louis XV. with war, although she did so without her stepson Ferdinand's authority, because he declined to accept the deceased Infanta's sister Antonia as a second wife for the Dauphin.

Greatly to the relief of Europe, which for thirty years she had disturbed by her ambitious schemes, the omnipotence of Elizabeth Farnese had, however, become a thing of the past by the end of the year 1747. Before the last days of 1748 her daughter-in-law the Infanta, leaving Elizabeth in San Ildefonso, a palace to which Ferdinand had ordered her to retire, arrived at Versailles, where she passed by the name of Madame Infante. Upon arrival she said that she had come to pass a fortnight; a year, however, elapsed, and she was still at Versailles enjoying the magnificent hospitality accorded her by her father.

As already related in the first volume of this work, this year was one of intrigue at the French Court, and one of triumph for the Infanta and Madame de Pompadour. The King's official mistress signalised the early days of 1749 by causing the dismissal and exile of the Comte Phélippeaux de Maurepas, a favourite with the King. Owing to his biting and witty tongue and still more biting and witty, if often disgusting, verses, there was no man more dreaded at the Court than Maurepas. The bitter enemy of Madame de Pompadour, he had been an equally bitter enemy of the preceding *maîtresse en titre* Madame de Châteauroux.

The way in which Pompadour succeeded in procuring his perpetual exile was not so much by saying that she expected to be poisoned by Maurepas in turn, as by convicting him of another offence. This was that of being the author of some of the scurrilous verses, called the *Poissonnades* (from her maiden name Poisson), directed against the King's mistress. In these anonymous publications the name of the King was often involved; thus when without any doubt Maurepas was found to have been the author of a disgraceful quatrain, she obtained the dismissal of this powerful Minister, who had been the greatest intimate of the Queen and the Princesses.

When the Infanta arrived at the Court she instantly concluded an alliance with Madame de Pompadour. She had guessed that—from hatred for Mesdames Henriette and Adélaïde her sisters—Pompadour would welcome her in a friendly way and would not harm her with the King. Nor was she mistaken, and soon Madame Infante had scored a triumph in obtaining a favour which had been refused to Henriette.

This was the grant of the set of apartments at Versailles connecting by a private staircase with those of the King, thus allowing her to visit him at every hour. Louise Élisabeth had so much to say to him, so much to ask of him that this was indeed an inestimable favour to have obtained. Mesdames Henriette and Adélaïde were all on the surface, without deepness of nature or innate cunning. Thus the Infanta was right when she termed her sisters, who served but as the instruments for the intrigues of others, "a pair of children."

Louise Elisabeth, however, so long under the instruction of the Parmesan Queen of Spain, was by no means

a child, although less than a year older than Henriette. She came to Versailles with a mind entirely depraved, and the King, who had parted from her as a mere child, was delighted to find her upon her return a tall and remarkably handsome young lady, whose airs of distinction completely threw her sisters into the shade. By the side of the *rusée* and beautiful Infanta her sisters seemed but a couple of *bourgeoises*, thus during the year of her stay they fell into the background.

Madame Victoire also, a year younger than Adélaïde, and for whom the King had plunged into ridiculous extravagances when he withdrew her from her convent at the cunning instances of Pompadour, was left entirely in the shade. Pompadour had brought Victoire from the convent as an offset to Henriette and Adélaïde, but their jealousy, especially that of Adélaïde for Henriette, whom she considered slighted by the attentions paid to the young girl from Fontevrault, had already caused the dismissal of Victoire from her grand apartments to consort with the young Louise and Sophie. Thus Victoire was already upstairs and out of the way before the arrival of Madame Infante.

For her the King could not do too much. He had eyes for no one else, and, moreover, forgave her the scandal which had at Madrid attached her name to that of M. de Vauréal, the Bishop of Rennes, an elderly gallant, the Ambassador of France. When Louis, always jealous of his daughters, had first heard of this scandal, he had been very angry; but when the Infanta arrived in person, he forgot that it had ever existed—she bewitched him.

The King cared no more for what the Court or her sisters said about his excessive intimacy with the Infanta

From the painting by Nattier. Copyright, W. Mansell & Co.

MADAME SOPHIE OF FRANCE.

than he cared what was said about the orgies in which he indulged with those sisters before her arrival. She arrived almost as a beggar, and had indeed much to ask for! After her husband having once been crowned at Milan with the Iron Crown of Lombardy, she was again a humble suppliant for a throne—any throne—instead of the miserable pittance of Parma. Did not weighty matters such as these require long and frequent consultations? Moreover, this daughter, badly provided for by Spain, required money—heaps of money! The King, therefore, granted her an enormous annual pension. Further, he established her—the mere Duchess of Parma—as the equal of her mother, the Queen of France, causing the same Royal honours to be paid to his daughter as to his wife.

Marie Lesczynska, already accustomed to suffer through her daughters, in addition to all the other humiliations which had been put upon her, was, unfortunate woman! obliged to put up in silence with this additional insult. The Infanta was not, however, satisfied with all that she received, but asked for more. Peace with Austria, England, and their allies—Holland, Saxony, Poland, and Sardinia—had but recently been concluded. She demanded war once more, in order that a crown might be wrested for herself—she would be a Queen. Her fixed idea, moreover, was the conquest of the German Empire, of which Francis of Lorraine, husband of Maria Theresa of Austria and Hungary, had become recently the Emperor. She required the son of the Emperor and Empress as husband for her little daughter, that she in time might become Empress—it was not impossible!

With the death of Charles VI., the father of Maria

Theresa, in 1740, the male line of the house of Hapsburg had become extinct—a line in which the Empire had been almost hereditary for hundreds of years. But after Charles Albert, Elector of Bavaria, had, as Charles VII., owned the Imperial dignity for four years, his death had caused the accession, in 1745, of Francis of Lorraine, who had exchanged his Duchy for that of Tuscany in 1737. This Prince, marrying the Hapsburg Maria Theresa, had children. Thus the Hapsburg-Lorraine line would probably keep the nominally elective Empire in their own family. The eldest son of this line, Joseph, a mere child, the Infanta demanded of her father, Louis XV., that he should procure for her infant daughter.

As a matter of fact, so far from this fatal ambition of the French Infanta being impossible, so possible was it that it was eventually realised, after oceans of blood had been shed, in the Seven Years' War, for its attainment. Her daughter became the first wife of Joseph, who, as Joseph II., was in 1765 elected to the Imperial throne upon the death of his father, while his brother succeeded to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany as Leopold I. Time, however, was necessary for the realisation of this scheme. This the Infanta would not see, and at last she wore out even her father with her foolish importunities. When she left Versailles for Parma at the end of 1749, her departure was no less of a relief to Louis XV. than it was to all other members of the Court of France.

CHAPTER II

The Dauphin, the Clergy, and Adélaïde

1749—1751

WHILE Madame de Pompadour, having contrived to disgust Louis with work, was keeping the thread of affairs in her own hands, the King wallowed in his debauchery. By day, hiding from the light, he shut himself up in the unhealthy *cabinets* at Versailles, or revelled with the wives of his nobles at his château of Choisy; by night he amused himself by making his daughters tipsy.

Far beyond him was it to realise the sense of the prudent revolution, suggested during the Regency by Law and now by Machault, in the system of taxation. This was the abolition of the privileges of the nobility and the clergy, the equal levy of all imposts upon these classes as well as upon the *bourgeoisie* and agricultural masses, who, the poorest in the State, were yet compelled to bear all its burdens. The clergy possessed a third of the total goods of the land of France, but so great was their power that from the time of Louis XIII. they had always resisted successfully when the question of making them pay a fair share had been mooted.

Even the great Cardinal Richelieu, a Churchman himself, had only with great difficulty wrung, under

name of a gift, a few miserable subsidies from the greedy and reluctant fingers of the Churchmen. Nevertheless, necessity, at the close of the War of the Austrian Succession, made it imperative for the ruined State to ask for help from the immensely rich clerical classes, the possessors of four or five thousand millions of livres.

Should the clergy ever have deigned to subscribe, with a minimum *gift*, to the State, it was well known that hitherto it was always the poor curés, the most indigent clerics, who had been compelled to find the money. Rich Princes of the Church would not pay, but exceeded in the wantonness and luxury of their mode of living the Court itself. The Comte de Clermont, of the Blood Royal, was the Abbé Commendataire de Saint-Germain des Prés, and held in his hands no less than two thousand benefices, which he could give away or sell. This valiant Churchman and General lived with girls of a loose life, and even carried off and detained by force the two Spanish actresses the Camargos, who were of noble origin.

M. de Machault, the Controller-General of Finance, determined to endeavour to force some of these proud lords of the Church to help in the greatest moment of the public necessity. In 1749 he suggested that the impost of "the twentieth" demanded from all others should be extended to the clergy, and in 1750 he demanded a "declaration of their possessions."

The great privileged class, the fat clergy, which during the preceding ten years had remained quiet and calm, became once more furiously fanatical. It alarmed the King, commenced fighting with the Parliament, once again took up the arms of oppression against the sensible Jansenists and the miserable Protestants—in

fact, took every means to cause the fear of another popular revolution of the nature of the Fronde.

The clergy attacked Louis, the pleasure-loving King, at once through his family, making unscrupulous use of the one force likely to have weight with a man as vicious as himself. It was the enervating influence, the blind devotion of his daughters which, as we have seen, were immolated in the good cause of the protection of the Church.

Madame de Pompadour, who was a real "First Minister," and as such felt herself responsible, realised that the Royalty was shamefully abasing itself. Madame de Vintimille, one of the four de Nesle sisters who had been the King's favourites, had endeavoured to prevent the nocturnal orgies of Louis. Pompadour did not follow her example, but begged that his suppers might be more open, not in the privacy of the cabinets. According to the Duc de Luynes, she suggested that a fine dining salon, on purpose for his suppers, should be constructed downstairs at Versailles, and that others should be present at these debauches besides his favourite daughters.

The Dauphin, however, the instrument of the Jesuits and the ultramontane party, gave to the mistress whom he hated no assistance in her laudable endeavour to preserve, or in a measure to retrieve, the good name of Madame Henriette. Although this young girl was already showing signs of illness and weakness, the result of the life she led, the Dauphin and the devout party behind him determined to push his sister to the bitter end. Her sacrifice was therefore continued. Henriette was kept to the front while the hand of her brother was carefully concealed. The Marquis d'Argenson, in

the same page in which he speaks of the infamous Cardinal de Tencin, one of the Dauphin's advisers, as being "only occupied with base intrigues of valets and of women," puts the situation clearly. He speaks of Henriette as being the directing hand of the family, and calls her the "Chief of the Council."

Outside of Versailles little of all this was known or realised. It is true that they compared the King to Henry III., the last of the Valois, who with his *mignons* had been the most despicable of French Monarchs.

Further, the people erroneously accused Louis in 1749 and 1750 of those crimes of carrying off young girls, of which he was not really guilty until a few years later—in 1754-64. The fact was that these thefts of children, both boys and girls, were but too common in the entourage of the Court. The Princes of the Blood Royal—Charolais, Clermont, Melun—the great *seigneurs* and farmers-general, not only caused children but sometimes young ladies to be torn from their homes, and these they kept by force concealed in their houses. Barbier gives an instance of a young lady of seventeen who, on escaping one Christmas time, said that from her childhood she had been kept in a condition of savagery as a captive.

Those who have read the horrible recitals of the debauched and cruel Marquis de Sade will understand the manner in which the victims suffered; and de Sade, whose books appeared in 1754, was but one of the numerous class of nobles which gloried in the most horrible evil living as a parody of love.

That children were being carried off there was no doubt, since, as previously in the days of Law, kidnapping was resorted to for the purposes of colonisation;

but the people in their fury, not knowing what became of them, recalled all the horrible stories of the Middle Ages, such as baths of blood being used to cure leprosy, and the sacrifices to the devil of children by the Maréchal Gilles de Retz in the fifteenth century. The ravishers were all supposed to be police officers in disguise, and the people said of the King, "It is he, it is this Herod, worn out by debauchery, who has become a leper, and who wishes to restore himself by innocent blood."

The police of Paris had indeed been making raids in 1749, first of all sweeping the town of street-walkers, then of poor servant-girls or young work-girls out of place; finally they carried off children too. It was said that members of the corps of Archers received fifteen crowns per head for those carried off. One Archer sold back again, for thirty crowns, to the parents, a little schoolboy whom he had stolen. Barbier further relates that others were stolen by horrible women to be sold to the rich.

The result of these infamies was that there were risings of the people; battles were furiously waged between them and the Archers. Many of these were put to death by the populace, while, on May 22nd, 1750, there were no less than four combats; barricades were made, and the house of a police commissaire sacked and destroyed.

On the following day troops fired on the mob, but nevertheless were forced to deliver over to them an Archer who had been surprised in the act of kidnapping a young girl. They brained the Archer and dragged his body to the hôtel of Berrier, the Lieutenant de Police, He kept the mob there, amusing them, until cavalry arrived and swept the Rue Saint-Honoré. The storm

gathered quickly, and huge mobs of people, yelling, "Let us burn Versailles!" prepared to march from Paris to the palace of the King, ten miles away.

At the Court there was considerable alarm as the news arrived of the revolutionary attitude of Paris. But further reports arriving, representing the state of affairs as not being so serious as at first supposed, Madame de Pompadour went into Paris to dine with a friend and see her little daughter by her husband Lenormant d'Étioles. In a state of terror the friend said to her, "For God's sake don't dream of dining here, Madame! The people will tear you to pieces!" She fled in alarm back to Versailles, where all shared her terror.

On the following day, May 23rd, 1750, the alarm was still greater as reports came in of continued violence in Paris. In spite of the presence of the King's Household, an army in itself, all trembled. Guards were placed at the bridge of Sèvres and at the pass of Meudon.

The King was about to proceed to Compiègne, but Versailles, in its fear, begged him to remain there with his guards. The women threw their arms around his beloved and sacred person, begging Louis on no account to pass through Paris. He eventually determined to go, but, like a whipped cur, to sneak outside the walls of Paris. "Why?" said the King, "should I wish to see a populace that calls me Herod?" Before daylight he had passed the city by, while its inhabitants asked, "Is it disdain, or is it fear?"

Thenceforward there was ever hatred between the King and his family and the people of Paris. Especially the turbulent Adélaïde, whose pride was wounded in her love for her father, was cut to the quick, and she never forgave the capital.

The Parisians made a wide road of the passage by which the King had passed, skirting the walls. It became known later by the name of *Chemin de la Révolte*, an appropriate title.

The anger of the people being effectually roused, it was necessary, in order to calm their angry passions, that the Parliament, that mainly judicial body, should take a hand in the game. Nothing appeased the populace more than to see some of the infamous women who sold children flogged through the streets, an Archer executed, and two miserable imitators of the manners of the Court burned alive. But this same Parliament of Paris, on the other hand, to console the Court and the police authorities, hanged three of the rioters.

For all that, authority had received its first violent blow, one from which it could not recover; the more so owing to the rank contradictions of Berrier, the Police Lieutenant, and of his followers. Berrier declared to the Parliament that there had been no carryings off of young women, no kidnapping of children. The members of the corps of Archers, on the other hand, in deadly fear of torture and the gallows, presented orders given to them by Berrier. They were Royal orders which came from Versailles, and were signed by the unreliable War Minister, the younger d'Argenson.

This was Comte Marc Pierre, whose elder brother was the honest René Louis de Voyer, Marquis d'Argenson, who has left us such valuable and outspoken memoirs in his private journal. Both were the sons of the Marquis Marc René d'Argenson, the redoubtable and sinister Police Lieutenant of Louis XIV.

The clergy, who were determined to pay nothing in reply to the demands of Machault, gained great strength

from these popular resistances. Seeing Paris against the King, the Provincial États, or States, of Languedoc and Brittany also not willing to surrender their ancient privileges to the uniformity of taxation, the Church in turn became violent, assuming in its General Assembly the attitude of Chief of the party of Liberty. This falsely assumed position was a mere mockery, for in the Church as well as in the États the law of the stronger still prevailed, the great oppressing the little and compelling obedience to their will.

The clergy seemed to be quite carried away in their republican tendencies; so great was the violence of their words and actions that the Court trembled, fearing some mischance to the King. Louis XV. was by no means uninformed; he well knew that the clergy were looking to their tool the Dauphin to replace him, while uttering regrets that the King was only just forty years old. With the recollection of Jacques Clément, the priestly murderer of Henri III., Louis also now dreaded a priestly assassin; no strange priests were therefore allowed to enter Versailles or the King's other palaces.

In his entry for October 31st, 1750, the Marquis d'Argenson says, "It is very true that the entry of the apartments of the Court is forbidden to every ecclesiastic, every monk. I know some Court abbés who have remained in the country, being unable to visit Fontainebleau. Only the Almoners on duty, whose names are given to the King's Guards, are able to enter the apartments."

The fat and unwieldy Dauphin had meanwhile got himself into disgrace with the King for the indiscretion of having written to the exiled Minister Maurepas, the intriguing, verse-writing enemy of Madame de Pompa-

dour. In Maurepas, the Royal Family and their backing of violent clergy, foresaw the man of the future, he who was to be their mainstay in a coming reign. The King had caused the arrest and imprisonment of his son's servant carrying the letter. While the innocent letter-carrier was languishing in a dungeon at Saumur, the Dauphin found himself being very closely observed by his father. The King, however, made no remark upon what had occurred to the son who was working behind his back against him; he was content to treat him with increased suspicion.

Surrounded with dangers, the King became saddened and discouraged. He showed his weakness to the clergy by sending to say that he would "not insist upon their paying the twentieth, he would be contented with a declaration of their goods." He had, however, the courage to order the dissolution of the rebellious Church Assembly; the Bishops were sent back to their dioceses, but without the King having given to Machault the necessary support to enable the Finance Minister to tap their gold-mines.

The King's sadness increasing, Pompadour, who had presented him with her beautiful château of Bellevue, caused the representation there of a vulgar and laughable farce. The King did not even smile; he knew that the Parisian populace not far away were cursing him for the extravagancies of this very Bellevue. In order, if possible, to chase away his sadness, Madame de Pompadour, never jealous except of some *grande dame* who might replace herself, arranged for him some elegant pavilions, meant to be the home of gallantry, at Verrières. She suggested some merry little lady, some pretty woman, with whom he might amuse himself. But nothing would

amuse the desponding Monarch, and meanwhile Henriette, the "Chief of the Council," was failing as the Dauphin continued in disgrace. Indeed, although only twenty-four years of age, the Princesse had not much more than a year to live. The clergy had been given six months in which to make their declaration of possessions, and, in spite of the King's weakness, they shook in their shoes, fearing that after all they would be compelled to pay at all events something. For the Dauphin's majority was to arrive on October 28th, and the King evidently did not intend to allow his son to take his seat in the Council, where his presence might hold in check M. de Machault, their dreaded foe.

Without Madame Henriette, without the Dauphin, the Church felt itself unsupported. A miracle, however, arrived, just in time to help the desponding prelates. Seeing the languid condition of her well-beloved elder sister, the turbulent young Adélaïde, at this time sixteen, pushed her to one side, usurped her place with the King. At all events, she assumed such a strong position with the father whom she adored as "the handsomest man in creation" that, while preparing her own reign for the following year, she was able to save the clergy before her sister's reign had quite expired.

Since the gentle, weak Henriette was useless, she was laid on one side with an increased princely establishment, greater possessions, a larger household, while the violent, strong-handed Adélaïde effected a complete change.

In October the disgraced Dauphin was no longer disgraced, but given a seat in the Council, and around that Council table the recalcitrant clergy may be truly said to have taken their seat with the Dauphin.

Adélaïde arranged all this at the time of *les chasses*, the hunting parties at Fontainebleau. She did not spare herself at the King's deep-drinking suppers at the *retours de chasses*, nor did she find it difficult to obtain what she wanted from the King at those drunken orgies. Five days after the arrival at Fontainebleau the Dauphin was permitted to present himself.

One sarcastic question Louis XV. allowed himself before he took his son back into favour. He asked him, " What do you think of Maurepas ? " The humble Dauphin bowed his head upon his fat chest and with downcast eyes replied, " I have forgotten his existence." He was embraced and forgiven ; but M. de Machault was nevertheless directed to become the instructor in public affairs of the Dauphin, who detested and feared him.

The influence of Adélaïde was, however, equal to dealing with Machault as royally as with her sister Henriette. In addition to the Ministry of the Finances, he was given the lucrative position of Keeper of the Seals. This was merely to provide the enemy of the clergy with a golden door for a graceful retirement from the Ministry of Finance. Needless to say that the clergy never made their declaration of possessions to the King ! They were instead allowed to make the estimate among themselves, " from clergy to clergy," at their own value !

The Church was happy and triumphant. Far from being obliged to defend herself, she was the conqueror ; especially as the King, not doing things by halves, now made over to her the rights hitherto vested in the magistrates—in the Parliament. The whole charity of Paris which included the direction of actual prisons, under the names of *la correction* and *la pénitence*, as well as

la bienfaisance, was handed over to the tender mercies of the clergy.

Hitherto the justiciary had had the control of not the hospitals only, but the prison of Saint-Lazare, also of the light-mannered ladies, including those belonging to the stage, disciplined roughly in the horrible sink of the Salpêtrière; the control also of children, apprentices, and pages. For a hundred years past the eye of justice had watched over all institutions of a correctional nature for the reformation of public morals. How the magistrates managed it may perhaps be realised from the fact that, owing to the sweepings of the streets by the police, the Salpêtrière alone contained seven thousand unfortunate young women. All this and more besides the King handed over to the priests. He gave them something else, calculated to put the handling of more money in their way, to give them additional power also among the masses.

It was customary at the birthdays and marriages of Princes and Princesses to make distributions to the poor, to marry girls of poor families by giving them a dowry. The money for the purpose of these *dons de fêtes* remained in Paris in the hands of the municipal magistrates. Upon the Dauphin's majority, the dowry money for the marrying off of six hundred girls was, however, transferred from the magistrates to the curés. This gave a fine opportunity for these latter to distribute the money as they pleased, after making vexations inquisitorial visits to inquire into the religious belief and personal conduct of the girls to be married.

With the return to power of the clergy, with that mass of flesh the Dauphin at their head, came a return of persecution in the south as well as in Paris. The

troops, returning from the war, were sent off to harry the unhappy remains of the Protestants, to hang the pastors who still exercised their ministry in secret in the woods and mountains. And the curés acted as inquisitors, who pointed out all those whom it was considered necessary to seize and *rebaptise* by force. In Paris the torture of the dying Jansenists recommenced. When at the last gasp, the dying man was subjected to the visit of a priest of the omnipotent faction, who subjected him to a cruel interrogatory as to his tenets and then refused him the last Sacraments.

Many died who might have recovered owing to this terrible persecution, and among them the saintly Père Coffin, the author of the hymns used throughout the whole Church. This Coffin had in the time of the Regency been successful in getting the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, to order that the instruction of the poor should be gratuitous. The Parliament and the *bourgeoisie*, who loved Coffin, were furiously enraged at his persecution.

Since the feeling of the Parliament of Paris was more distinctly Jansenistical even than it had been, thirty-five years earlier, at the death of the tyrant Louis XIV., it can easily be imagined that the cruel action of the clergy was calculated to bring about, and speedily, a wide breach between the Church and that magistracy whose functions they had so largely been allowed to assume. In fact, the quarrel and struggle which now commenced between the " men of the robe " and the clergy continued with increasing bitterness during the rest of the long reign of Louis XV. Indeed, it can scarcely be said ever to have ended until forty years later the French Revolution put an end to King and clergy together.

Meanwhile, although admitted to the Council, the Dauphin had more discretion than to interfere between the King and his sisters. Adélaïde, now "Chief of the Council," in place of Henriette, was, to the general scandal, declared before long his "favourite" by the King. In February, 1751, she drove in the Royal sledge alone with her father, while Henriette followed in another sledge behind.

CHAPTER III

The Apogee of Adélaïde

1751—1752

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With Adélaïde at the helm, the three principal women in France seemed all melancholy and sickly together. The Queen continually suffering from ill-health, taking no interest in State affairs about which her opinion was never asked, paid strict attention to her devotions. Her principal companion was a skull, said to be that of the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, who had, while preserving her beauty, carried on a life of immorality and pleasure to a great age. This skull did not, however, go by the name of Ninon, but was generally known by the affectionate term of *la Mignonne*. Madame de Pompadour was faded, sickly, and dull ; there was nothing enlivening about her. Henriette, pale, mute, and decayed, seemed near her end. The King himself was sad, and his complexion had become yellow. Only amid this general depression did Adélaïde remain buoyant, fresh, full of ardour and will. This impetuous young lady was at eighteen the mainspring of Versailles, for even the Dauphin, under his covering of fat, was at the time that his wife bore him an heir as sickly as the rest. It was not very long before he had a severe attack of smallpox.

With Versailles in this general state of despondency,

it is not to be imagined that the fêtes, at the end of December, 1751, to celebrate the birth of the Dauphin's heir, were a great success, especially as, to make things worse, the north wind put out the illuminations. All through the year the contest between Church and State had been continued. As the price of absolution, when the King and his daughters—to the surprise of many—took the Sacrament at Easter, the clergy demanded more than ever. They insisted that the King should declare their *divine right* of exemption from taxation. Louis, however, would not recognise this divine immunity. It was too much opposed to the monarchical faith of his great-grandfather Louis XIV. for Louis XV. to accept it. He, on the other hand, maintained that everything was the right of the King of France. Adélaïde, in a fury, declared that she would enter a convent of Carmélites if her father would not yield. "Not until you are twenty-five or if you become a widow," replied the King angrily. And he left the Court and went off to stay at Crécy with Madame de Pompadour. This exceeding zeal had to be considerably diminished before the King could be recaptured—in the autumn—at Fontainebleau.

By November the intrepid, choleric soul of the young Adélaïde showed out in the King's behaviour. To give over Paris to the priests, he insulted the Parliament, making that body hand over to himself all the notes of their private deliberations on the subject of the clergy. Taking these dangerous notes from the President Maupeou, the King haughtily ordered the *conseillers* of the Parliament to occupy themselves no longer with that affair. Upon the receipt of this outrage by the men of the robe, the struggle, hitherto religious, became

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MADAME LOUISE MARIE OF FRANCE.

revolutionary—the King in person became more and more the object of Parliamentary attack.

There was every reason for this. War taxes were continued in peace-time, new loans also raised simply to satisfy the King's extravagancies. His little pleasure-houses, at Choisy and elsewhere, ate up millions, in addition to the millions required for Versailles. His mad expenses for Pompadour and, especially at this epoch, for his daughters ran away with many more millions of livres. Even to bring his young daughter Victoire from her convent at Fontevrault to Versailles had cost a million! Half a million had been the expenses of Madame Infante on coming to Paris. A new set of apartments for the Dauphin seemed cheap by the side of these wicked extravagancies, for they only cost eighteen hundred thousand francs.

When we consider the actions of this King of France, we must not forget that at the very time that he was thus lavishly throwing money away by the barrelful for his daughters, the bread of the unfortunate prisoners was being reduced! There was a riot in the prison of Fort l'Évêque owing to the fact that its miserable occupants were being starved to death. The soldiers fired upon them; many were wounded, and two women killed!

The great scientific work of the age, the book of amassed knowledge containing many liberal and even free-thinking tenets, had already at this time been commenced by the philosophers. Diderot, d'Alembert, Voltaire, and many others, had already set their hands to the compiling of the *Encyclopédie*. Its commencement had been in 1750, and the influence of Madame de Pompadour, who posed as the protectress of *les belles lettres*.

had prevailed against that of the clergy with Louis XV., who detested literature, with the result that permission had been granted for the great work to be proceeded with. By it the first *Économistes* of France made a clean sweep of a world of old-fashioned conditions and entered into the real road of thought and progress. The idea of the *Encyclopédie*, in which this school embodied its schemes, was a substantial exposition of everything which human genius had conceived or created since the beginning of society.

But it did not confine itself to what had been effected in the sciences, nor to a purely historical treatment of the progress of philosophy, literature, and art; it aspired to the inculcation of doctrine and the development of ideas. Indeed, it sometimes insinuated and sometimes openly preached sentiments of philosophical doubt, of scepticism, of materialism, and even of atheism, although the latter was not with the approbation of Voltaire. For, in spite of what has been said against the poet, tragedian, comedian, and historian, Voltaire, the famous author of the great humanitarian poem the *Henriade*, was ever a decided Deist, and rebuked that philosophy which attempted to banish God from the universe. Upon the portals of the church which he himself erected at Ferney he inscribed the words, "Voltaire to God," when the narrow-minded Bishop of Annecy refused to consecrate the building. Nevertheless, making use of the lessons of physical philosophy which he had learned in England under the teachings of Newton, he assailed by their instrumentality the moral systems of the Jesuits and other Christian sects.

The *Encyclopédie* was, however, by no means completed when, in February, 1752, Madame Henriette

lay dying, and the priests represented to the King that she might recover if he would only perform a good work in the sight of God, and suppress the great book. Most heartily the King agreed to do so. Foul liver as he was, he ever had the greatest regard for at any rate the outward forms and accepted doctrines of the Catholic religion.

It was the Jesuit Père Pérusseau, who, from his rough treatment of the Duchesse de Châteauroux during the King's illness at Metz, had been formerly for long in ill-favour, that brought about the publication of the edict suppressing the *Encyclopédie.*

Henriette, however, did not recover. She displayed the same sweetness and gentle manner in the moments of her death for which she had been remarkable during her life. Her chief thought in dying seemed to be for Adélaïde, the younger sister who had eclipsed her. She frequently repeated the words, "*Ma sœur!—ma chère sœur!*"

The direct cause of her death was feminine vanity. A little irritating scalp affection causing her hair to fall out at times, she made use of a violent remedy which had been left her by her sister Madame Infante, when she departed for Parma. This pernicious medicine was too powerful for a young woman already in a debilitated condition, owing to the dissipated life which her ungodly father had compelled her to lead.

When at last she was dead, the King showed himself greatly affected; he did not, however, display any of the excessive poignancy of grief which he had shown in 1741 upon the death of Pauline Félicité de Nesle, whom he had made the nominal wife of Félix de Vintimille. That young lady was indeed the one really

serious love of his life, although, characteristically, he did nothing to prevent her poor body from being grossly insulted after she died, poisoned by the priests, just after she had brought the King's son into the world. Nor did Louis subsequently trouble his head much about the baby whose coming had at first caused him so much delight. The boy, however, lived to manhood.

It was not for long that Henriette was mourned. While the King and Adélaïde may rather be said to have seemed troubled than grieved, the latter did not even attend her sister's funeral, nor did she shed a single tear. Neither did the Queen mourn the daughter through whom she had suffered so much disgrace in her own household. Marie Lesczynska had long since, so de Luynes informs us, looked upon the daily kiss of ceremony with her elder daughters with disgust. After Henriette's death the Queen accordingly very soon resumed her ordinary habits of card-playing and so on. Adélaïde, deprived of her sister, only devoted herself all the closer to her father, of whom in time she became almost the tyrant, in spite of the efforts of Madame de Pompadour to minimise her influence.

The misfortune of Adélaïde, impetuous and vehement as she was by nature, was to have been brought up in the unhealthy atmosphere of Versailles; to be always spoiled, always listened to, and applauded. She found herself feared from her earliest childhood. If she could not obtain her desire, she created a scene, stamped on the floor, screamed; and she gained her ends. She had been early instructed in Biblical history, and had learned the story of Judith, the beautiful and treacherous daughter of Merari, and how, after attracting Holofernes to her couch, she struck off his head when intoxicated.

This story had made a great impression upon Adélaïde when, in her twelfth year, war broke out with the English.

She took some gold with her and ran away from Versailles, only being recaptured after a terrible hue and cry.

"Whither are you going, Madame?" she was asked.

"I am going to put myself at the head of the army. I will bring the haughty Englishman to the feet of Papa, the King," the young Princesse replied.

"But how, Madame?"

"I will make the lords come to sleep with me, at which they will be greatly honoured, and I will kill them, one after the other."

"Say, rather, in a duel, Madame?"

"No," replied the young Adélaïde, vehemently; 'not in a duel. Papa, the King, forbids duels—and a duel is a sin."

As she grew up the corrupt ladies of the Court lent her improper books and pictures, but they barely interested her. To gain her more thoroughly, they talked to her of the beauty of the King—she would do anything for those who went into ecstasies about the handsome appearance of her father. She had been early taught that which Cosnac, Bishop of Valence, says were the tenets of Henriette d'Angleterre—the unfortunate Madame—wife of the effeminate Duc d'Orléans, and beloved by Louis XIV., her husband's brother. This was that Princes have a morality for themselves, free to do as they please. It was a code frequently followed at the Court of France.

After the death of Henriette the Jesuit party, seeking

to bind still closer the chains which united Adélaïde to her father, suggested that she should ask for an apartment in which she could remain alone without her ladies—one beyond and communicating with the apartments of the King. They wished in this manner to make her absolute mistress of the Monarch at all hours. The indignation of Madame de Pompadour was rightly aroused. She attacked the Jesuits and cried shame upon them. Boldly facing Père Pérusseau, the King's Jesuit confessor, Pompadour demanded from him how he dared to allow the King to communicate in the evil state of life in which he lived. For two years the Marquise managed to defeat the priests upon this subject of Adélaïde's apartments. D'Argenson says that Pompadour suggested that, until a proper set of apartments could be constructed for her on the first floor, the favourite daughter should use those which the Infanta had occupied, and which possessed the secret staircase. To arrange the proper apartments would have taken three months, but the King's mistress took good care that the building should take at least eight times as long as necessary.

Madame de Pompadour had M. de Machault with her against the cabal of the clergy and the family. He pointed out emphatically in 1752 that another war with England was looming ahead, since already there was fighting in the American and Indian colonies, where the colonists of both nations were constantly attacking each other. Therefore, said Machault, peace should be made by the King with the Parliament, as he would be in want of money more than ever, especially as the French fleet was reduced to one single man-of-war.

In North America the gallant Frenchman la Salle, starting from La Nouvelle France, or Canada, had

already, fifty years earlier, discovered Ohio and Illinois, navigated the great lakes, crossed the Mississippi, constructed forts in the midst of savage districts, and taken possession of Louisiana in the name of Louis XIV. But the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 had crushed the power of France on the side of Canada, for by it Acadia and Newfoundland, the gates of New France, had fallen into British hands. Through the development of her colonies the power of England was increasing more and more accordingly, at the same time that her fleets assured her the mastery of the seas along the North American coasts. The French Governors, however, were clever enough to counterbalance the influence of the English by the treaties of friendship which they made with the Red Indians. With these blood-thirsty savages to supplement the meagre forces supplied from France, the brave Canadians were able to make a far stronger stand against British aggression than would otherwise have been possible. The commerce of Nouvelle France was, however, terribly hampered by the crushing system of monopolies, while the English were both free and courageous, rich also. Thus the commercial rivalry between the two nations was bound to end in the advantage of the English colonists, especially as their mother-country held the dominion of the seas.

M. de Machault and the extravagant Madame de Pompadour were both aware of the coming necessities of France, both also hated the priestly faction. Louis was the more inclined to listen to their advice against that of Adélaïde, on account of interior disturbances caused by the great scarcity of wheat. He endeavoured to make the Church which he had too greatly favoured moderate its zeal, above all cease from the persecutions

with which they harassed the Jansenists. But they would not listen to him; nor, on the other hand, would the Parliament of Paris, which was retaliating on the priesthood with fine and imprisonment, obey the King when he ordered them to desist from attacking the clergy. They merely offered their resignation in a body to the King, while continuing more bitterly to war against the Church, which followed laws of its own and refused to pay the taxes. The Parliaments of Aix and Rouen followed suit, while the Parliament of Toulouse went so far as to arrest its Archbishop.

The dissensions became worse when the Jansenistical Parliament of Paris threatened to arrest its Archbishop also, while at the same time persecuting writers in the *Encyclopédie*. On the pretence that de Prades, a doctor of the Sorbonne, had too greatly "humanised" Jesus Christ in his thesis, his arrest was ordered, but he escaped to Berlin.

Since the Parliament became more and more severe for the refusing priests (*les prêtres refusants*), and the Archbishop continued to defy the judicial body, in May, 1752, a pathetic scene was played by the Royal Family. Calling M. de Beaumont, the Archbishop of Paris, "a martyr," they threw themselves at the feet of the Monarch, demanding, with tears in their eyes, his protection for the prelate who continued to order the torture of the souls of the dying Jansenists.

In his anxiety to obtain the necessary registration for the decrees enabling him to raise money, Louis tried to temporise. He promised the Parliament that he would cause search to be made for a private printing-press which was publishing violent pamphlets against the men of the robe. This printing-press was well

known to everybody to be actually in the Archbishop's own palace. It already seemed, therefore, as if the Parliament were about to triumph over the priesthood when Adélaïde played her trump card. The young girl of nineteen suddenly withdrew herself from the set of apartments connected with those of the King by the secret staircase. She installed herself at a distance, in the long-since vacant suite formerly occupied by that intriguing member of the house of Condé, the Duchesse du Maine.

For two months Adélaïde continued to sulk at a distance from her father, but when the time of the *chasses* arrived once more, father and daughter made up their quarrels again at that wonder-working place the Palace of Fontainebleau.

Louis might pretend as he liked, and do his best to flatter and deceive the Parliament after this reconciliation with his daughter; he was, however, thenceforward with the clergy heart and soul. Meanwhile, as a result of all this bitterness and bickering, nothing was done to prepare for that war which was surely coming.

Adélaïde, at this time, usurped the position and state of the Queen. She spoke for the King, and ordered for him and herself together, saying, "We will do this; we require such a thing to be done."

Although history speaks of this young Princesse Adélaïde as having been handsome with a good colour, there seems to have been something singularly uncouth in her disposition. Especially was she uncouth in her musical tendencies. Adoring music, she played upon all instruments, and upon all equally badly. The result of her playing was but to produce a series of discordant sounds, which merely varied in intensity

according to whether she played loudly or softly. The King was well aware of her utter want of ear, and the Duc de Luynes records that often for fun, just to hear how badly she could play, Louis would hand his daughter a violin. As a rule she preferred to play loudly and furiously. Neither did Adélaïde possess the graces expected of Royalty. She indulged in common language, always mentioned Madame de Pompadour by the horribly coarse nickname of "*Maman Putain*," and seemed utterly wanting in feminine charm. This disgusting nickname was used by her little sisters also, and in the presence of the King himself. Madame Infante also, who, in October, 1752, contrived to return to Paris from Parma, does not seem to have resented hearing this common designation of "Mamma Prostitute." The indifference of the King to what his daughters said of Pompadour led the Marquis d'Argenson to imagine, with the rest of the world, that the downfall of the Marquise was then near at hand. But he was greatly mistaken, for not even the trickeries with the King of her false friend the Comtesse d'Estrades could affect her. Indeed, in spite of the rivalries of every description with which she was surrounded, Pompadour was settled firmly enough upon the seat which she was to occupy yet for a dozen years to come. When she wished to become actually Madame la Duchesse it is true that she failed, but the Queen herself was not sorry to lend the mistress her support against her daughters, according to her the right of the *tabouret*, as though she were termed Duchesse, and allowing her to be seated in her presence. It would seem as if the Queen realised that she had less to fear from the favourite, who always treated her with becoming respect

From the painting by Nattier. Copyright, W. Mansell & Co.

MADAME ADÉLAÏDE OF FRANCE.

and humility, than she had from the disgraceful liberty of the Royal Princesses.

Moreover, at this very time, September, 1752, Pompadour maintained her power, not as a mistress but as a Minister, and was doing her best to maintain the Parliament, in which she was strongly seconded by Machault. Only at the end of August d'Argenson records that "the Marquise de Pompadour disposes of everything. My brother [the powerful War Minister, Comte d'Argenson] says openly before me that he can dispose of nothing according to merit, and that the Marquise snatches from him all the places to be given away. She imagines herself Queen, and seems to have dreamed as much one night. Lately she said to the Foreign Ministers, "There will be quite a number of Tuesdays, gentlemen, that the King will be unable to see you; for I do not think that you will come to seek *us* at Crécy." This *us* assimilates her to the Queen."

In truth, with Madame Adélaïde saying *we* at Fontainebleau and Madame de Pompadour saying *us* at Versailles, both courtiers and Ministers must at times have been more than a little puzzled to know who was the real Queen of Louis XV.!

The Court had, in fact, become little else than a mixed-up scandal shop, especially after the now elderly Comtesse de Toulouse, a great lady who had played a very peculiar part during the King's youth, reappeared upon the scene. Hear again the honest d'Argenson: "The Comtesse de Toulouse has regained a great ascendancy over the King. His Majesty never ceases talking with this Princesse. This augments the credit of the Noailles, which was already sufficiently harmful to the kingdom. All this becomes more than ever the

government of the seraglio—women and eunuchs, and their troublesome passions. See what has resulted from the residence of our Monarchs at Versailles! It is the Comtesse de Toulouse who has procured the journey of Madame de Parme [the Infanta] to France. She has carried the day against everybody who objected what an expense it would be for our miserable finances."

Such was the condition of affairs at Versailles, when at length Maria Theresa determined to take a hand in the game.

CHAPTER IV

A Three-handed Struggle

1752—1755

AUSTRIA, perfectly well informed as to the ascendancy of the Church party through the influence of the strong-minded Adélaïde, thought at the end of 1752 that the time had come to bind France once more to her car, to recapture her late enemy through the tradition of "the Catholic alliances."

Despite the treachery to France of the old-womanish Cardinal Fleury, who time and again crippled the French arms in the interests of Austria, war had been waged from 1733 to practically 1737 over the question of the Polish succession. Priestly influences had then resulted in the dismissal by Louis of Chauvelin, whose patriotic resistance to Cardinal Fleury had been the means of obtaining for Stanislas, the ex-King of Poland and the Queen's father, the duchies of Lorraine and Bar, with their succession to France at his death.

Chauvelin was the one strong Minister in France whom the young Maria Theresa, later Queen of Hungary and Archduchess of Austria and the Netherlands, had to fear. She had just been married to Duke Francis of Lorraine, whom Chauvelin forced to exchange Lorraine for the archduchy of Tuscany, when the Catholic

alliances caused the Minister's perpetual exile from Versailles and the counsels of France.

Again, from 1741 to 1748, after the death of Charles VI., Emperor of Germany and the father of Maria Theresa, war had raged over the question of the young Queen of Hungary's right of succession to her father's dominions. In this war France, allied to Frederick the Great, then a young man, was opposed to England and Austria. The Queen of France, her daughters, the Dauphin and the clerical party had, however, done all in their power to show their sympathies with and to assist the cause of Maria Theresa, the enemy of France.

How repeatedly Frederick of Prussia, the Protestant ally of France, was left in the lurch, how consistently his wise counsels, given in the interests of France, were disregarded, have already been detailed. And yet had Frederick been but loyally treated by his ally, this young Prince of Brandenburg and Prussia, with his French education and ultra-French sympathies, would have undoubtedly secured glorious victory for France. Instead of this, disgusted with his treatment by Versailles, Frederick made a peace on his own account alone, by which he secured to his crown his recent conquests from Maria Theresa in Silesia.

The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 had been a disgraceful one for France, who lost all her conquests in the Austrian Netherlands, and relinquished the grip which she was just securing on Holland.

With the exception of the Royal Family, who brought it about, the whole country of France, wounded in its *amour propre*, was furious at the conclusion of this peace. All that the Royal Family gained by it was the little establishment of Parma, in Italy, for the

King's son-in-law and cousin Don Philip, one of the Infantes of Spain.

The policy of the Catholic alliances had, indeed, been answerable for a miserable result to so much bloodshed and misery in years of warfare. All this had been bitterly realised in France, and by none more clearly than Madame de Pompadour, whose influence was by no means a factor to be disregarded, since her inclinations leaned towards Protestant Prussia. Accordingly, with the intention of stirring up to the bottom the cup of bitterness between France and the Protestant countries, England and Prussia, Maria Theresa sent the magnificent Kaunitz as Ambassador to France.

Kaunitz arrived in Paris with the intention of making as much of a Frenchman of himself as possible, and the following month (October, 1752) arrived the Infanta from Parma, she being now as much in sympathy with Austria as the rest of the Royal Family.

Arriving full of her dream of making her little daughter Empress, Louise Élisabeth de France showed considerable diplomacy in her treatment of Adélaïde. She wept in her sister's arms, and insisted that she could lodge nowhere else than in her apartments, where she knew that the real Royalty was centred.

The Court was, as already mentioned, at Fontainebleau, and the *Encyclopédie* in disgrace more than ever. Jean Jacques Rousseau, who always behaved as a rat to his brother-philosophers, had struck against his party viciously in his *Discours des sciences*, and his opera the *Devin du village* was being performed with tumultuous success at Fontainebleau at the memorable epoch of the arrival of Kaunitz and the Infanta. Diderot had also been imprisoned at Vincennes, merely saving

his head by accepting the censorship of the priests for the portion of the work already completed, while the great spirit Montesquieu and the brilliant genius Buffon were compelled humbly to bow the knee to the Sorbonne. At this same time the brilliant d'Alembert, the illegitimate son of the outrageous Madame de Tencin, who abandoned him at his birth, had in despair of success deserted the cause and given up the editorship. Frederick of Prussia had delighted the Court when, in 1752, he caused the burning of a book written by his friend Voltaire.

Thus Kaunitz found the philosophical, anti-clerical party weakened and in disunion, and not less disunited was the parliamentary anti-clerical party. For there was no consistency in the Parliament. There existed a strong revolutionary spirit among its younger *conseillers*, and its older Jansenistical forces remained antagonistic to the new philosophy. By attacking the *Encyclopédie* at the same time as it attacked Christophe de Beaumont, the Archbishop of Paris, the Parliament showed what an impotent lame duck it had really become. The idiotic attempts of this halting bird to poke its beak violently in several different directions at once had only the effect of causing itself to be laughed at as a bedraggled farmyard fowl, not feared as a soaring and discerning eagle.

Adélaïde, the younger d'Argenson, the Jesuits—those who pushed the Dauphin—prepared to strike. The King was pushed violently, blindly, against the Parliament, the plan being to exasperate that body to a crisis in which it might destroy itself. Thus Machault might be hunted out and the goods of the Church saved. Under sufficient provocation, however, even a lame duck will fight, especially if its ducklings are attacked

by a snake or a cat. The Archbishop of Paris, encouraged by the Royal Family, was the snake.

At the very end of 1752 the whole of Paris was in an uproar because he refused the Sacraments to an old dying nun. The Parliament declared his temporality sequestered, and sought to arrest the prelate. He, however, ranked as a peer, and the *pairs de France* refused to sit to give the order. A young *conseiller* then attacked the King, boldly raising the question as to who were the real speculators in wheat at that time of universal want. The older magistrates in vain sought to control him. Insisting on speaking, he declared that there were no less than eighty concealed granaries of wheat in the hands of the speculators, of whom the King was known to be one of the principals. The King refused to hear the remonstrances, and the Parliament in turn refused to sit. Things were at a deadlock when, by May 8th, 1753, the King, in his anxiety to obtain registration of the edicts to raise money, thought of yielding. Home influences determined him to do the contrary.

On May 9th the King caused the Parliament to be carried off, the *conseillers* to be scattered over the length and breadth of France; some members were, indeed, confined in dungeons. The Grand Chamber was spared at first, but soon cruelly exiled like the others, while the King established a "Royal Chamber" to replace them. No one, however, would plead before this Royal Chamber; it became ridiculous.

Meanwhile London was shouting for war, and, in America, the English Company of the Ohio was establishing armed posts in what was considered French territory.

In Paris the most scandalous reports were circulated about Madame Adélaïde. The private journals of the time record the fact that this Princesse was *enceinte.* Even the Marquis d'Argenson credits the report, and in his Memoirs records that people accuse the Cardinal de Soubise. He adds cautiously, "Others name *another*, even less to be named."

A little later, while the report ran that Adélaïde had given birth to a son, afterwards M. de Narbonne—a report confirmed after the Revolution by M. de Valery, the Royal librarian—the King was forced to bring the Parliament back again, to flatter and lie to the judicial body. At the same time the finances were taken from Machault and given to M. de Séchelles, a tool of the clergy and friend of the Comte d'Argenson. Machault, however, retained the Ministry of Marine (August, 1754).

As if the scandal about Adélaïde were not sufficient, the King at this time, when Paris was almost in a state of revolution and the police terrified, was continuing his immoralities under the Queen's very roof.

While Machault and Madame de Pompadour, the Prince de Conti and all the moderates, were endeavouring to calm the general fanaticism, the Queen was amusing herself by employing the celebrated painter Boucher to paint a Holy Family in her apartments. He had brought for the purpose two little fat angels, rosy cheeked, with rounded limbs, it being his custom to seek out success by the employment of the most sensual effects. These were two young girls of Irish extraction named Murphy, whose hidden charms Boucher portrayed openly everywhere in the most hazardous postures. The time had now come when the jaded appetites of Louis could only be aroused by young and idiotic girls—a lady,

any one sensible, Pompadour, had she but known it, need never more fear as a rival.

The King came backwards and forwards so often to the Queen's apartments to see the painting of the angels, that he took a fancy to one of the models. Thenceforward the mighty King of France gave shelter in a garret apartment under the roof at Versailles to one of these common little Irish girls—a creature with a tiny mouth of infantine pattern.

The Queen, well informed of what had taken place, paid no attention to her husband's last freak. It is indeed probable that, long since worn out with the horrors of Versailles, the unhappy Marie Lesczynska looked upon this last disgraceful action of Louis as being less of a sin than others which had been openly flaunted before her eyes and those of the Court.

While the mystery of the girl in the garret was covertly laughed at in the Court, openly sneered at in the streets of Paris, there was another mystery which gave rise to considerable discussion, indeed anxiety, in various quarters. The King was in the habit of receiving several times a week in his most secret cabinet one of the Blood Royal, the Prince de Conti. All wondered what His Majesty could have of such importance to discuss with this Prince, whose ideas were by no means considered orthodox.

This bold and ambitious cousin of the Condé family had formerly been actually elected King of Poland, against Augustus III., Elector of Saxony, the father of the Dauphin's second wife. But the intrigues of Austria had carried the day against him in favour of Augustus, whose father had also been ruler of both Saxony and Poland, he having ousted Stanislas from

the throne of the latter country. Conti was therefore strongly anti-Austrian and anti-Saxon. He was not usually well thought of by the King, since, on account of his moderate views, it was the fashion at Court to describe him as being an atheist. This was because he maintained that even a Protestant was entitled to civil rights, and that a Jansenist ought to be allowed to die in peace. Such heretical doctrines as these were naturally not very acceptable to the Jesuit-driven, bigoted Louis XV.

The cause of Conti's closetings with the King were indeed such as to cause alarm to the Archbishop and faction of Adélaïde, since he was preaching to his Royal cousin the advantages of an alliance with the Protestant Frederick and of a reconciliation with the Parliament, arguing that the King should support the men of the robe and Machault, and force the clergy to pay up.

That the *conseillers* were brought back from exile, we have seen, but Adélaïde was strong enough to prevent the Prince de Conti from being listened to any further.

In order to obtain the registration of the edicts the King pretended to back up the Parliament at last, while really saving the Archbishop (who still refused the Sacraments to the dying Jansenists) from being torn to pieces by the furious populace. He sentenced the Archbishop of Paris to exile at Conflans—merely a few miles away from Paris—writing at the same time, "I have punished him." For the time being the Parliament was deceived, and it now jubilantly declared the famous Bull *Unigenitus* "abusive." The King merely expressed his regret—mildly. The Archbishop, however, continued as before; he was then sent six leagues from

Paris, to Lagny. From Lagny he continued his fulminations, while he and all the assembly of clergy were secretly laughing in their sleeves at the Parliament. For, with all this storm in a teapot about granting or withholding the Sacraments, they were merely amusing the men of the robe, keeping them off the true scent, the scheme of Machault for their taxation, until Machault was out of the Finances.

The King in secret had promised the clergy that the taxation should never be enforced against them; they could therefore well afford to laugh. It had taken them five years to gain their ends, but they gained them. It is difficult to carry out the details of the quarrel step by step; moreover, it is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that although they saw that they had been tricked, when in 1755 the English without any declaration of war carried off three hundred French merchant ships, the Parliament yielded to the King.

The country being absolutely without means of defence, it voted, on September 8th, 1755, for a continuation of the taxes for six years. Although the Parliament of Paris had acted patriotically and in the interests of France, by this step it lost all its partisans. In fact, it had killed itself.

Meanwhile, the tyrant Adélaïde had herself fallen under the yoke of a tyrant. One of her ladies was the impudent Comtesse d'Estrades, the evil-living, evil-speaking mistress of the Comte d'Argenson. Presumably from the too great knowledge which she possessed of the secrets of the Princesse, this bad woman held Adélaïde in a kind of terror, not allowing her a will of her own, not allowing her to possess anything. It became publicly known that, owing to her extreme avarice, Madame

d'Estrades kept Madame Adélaïde in want even of such things as shoes and stockings. Seeking to become on better terms with the Princesse, Madame de Pompadour asked her if she did not want to be rid of the Comtesse. Timidly, when pressed, she replied Yes. Pompadour got the King to send d'Estrades away, but he was also timid. He gave the impudent Comtesse an enormous allowance, with which she established herself in a sort of Court at Chaillot, while remaining the mistress of d'Argenson.

CHAPTER V

Pompadour's "Dear Friend and Cousin" Maria Theresa

1755—1756

With the end of the year 1755 Madame la Marquise de Pompadour became practically Queen of France. This was by the grace of Maria Theresa, and through the good offices of Kaunitz, the brilliant Ambassador. Kaunitz brought about such affectionate terms between the Empress and the mistress of Louis XV., that the former eventually wrote to the latter as "*Ma cousine*"!

Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, Count of Rietberg, was born, one of nineteen children, at Vienna in 1711. He was Chamberlain of the Emperor Charles VI. for some years, and at the age of twenty-four became Aulic Councillor of the Empire. By his marriage he then gained the County of Rietberg. He had already been employed in various diplomatic missions by Maria Theresa, and signed for Austria the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, before he became a Minister of State, and came as Ambassador to France, as a Prince of the Empire, in 1752.

This clever diplomatist was of Slav origin, with a veneer of the German overlaid. He arrived at Versailles in 1752, about the same time as the Infanta, and he remained there for two years, closely observing every-

thing that went on and assimilating himself to French ideas. During those two years he closely sought the alliance of Madame de Pompadour. He then returned to his proud, choleric, and full-fleshed mistress, and proceeded at once to endeavour to convert her from the enemy to the friend of Louis XV., to make Maria Theresa accept the spirit and ideas of Versailles—and of modern France.

So well did Kaunitz succeed that ere long men of letters began to be welcomed at Vienna, while the devout Empress even caused the Archduchesses her daughters to perform at Schoenbrunn the plays of the infidel Voltaire.

One thing Kaunitz had clearly seen and understood—the difference between the life of Versailles and that of Paris. While, in its old age, he saw the wearing out of the Royalty, with its hidden actions in dark corners and its secret cabinets, he likewise realised the new life which was struggling up among the people, the philosophers, for the enlightenment of the world. The vices of Paris were imitated at Vienna as well as its arts, it is true; but Kaunitz, the imitator, could not carry back with him the traditions of the part without giving an imitation of the whole.

Maria Theresa, strange to say, entered freely into the ideas of her Ambassador and counsellor, when he strove to lead her mind in the direction of reforms and laws in her own kingdom which should make Austria as a whole more acceptable to France. Kaunitz had become Voltairian in his mode of regarding life. With her hatred of Prussia, her furious desire to regain Silesia, her ardent craving for money to effect the reconquest of that lost country, the devout Catholic, Maria Theresa,

followed her Voltairian Minister—accepted his principles. She herself became revolutionary where the matter of the goods of the Church was concerned. Like M. de Machault and the Parliament of Paris, the Queen-Empress began to wish to draw upon the almost hereditary Church possessions in the hands of the great families; above all, she determined to tap the boundless resources of the two thousand convents in Austria, to stop the canal of gold which flowed from them to Rome, to dam it for her own advantage. With these ideas, and the assistance of a Dutch doctor, a Swabian legist, and a Jew financier, Alfred Michiels informs us Maria Theresa broke down the tyranny of the Church and imposed her own will alone as supreme.

In this revolutionary and high-handed action the devout Austrian woman exhibited certainly a strange contrast to the Court of France. There, for all his scandalous family life, Louis XV., to the great amusement of the English, still remained too timorous to dare to touch a single centime from Church sources. He made a fuss and a hullabaloo, asked for the twentieth, then for a declaration of possessions, after all which he crept, like a whipped hound, back into his kennel, while crying out to the priests, "I assure you I didn't mean anything; I was only barking just for fun, to see what you would do."

Meanwhile, in England there were dissensions among those who derided France. George II., as ruler of Hanover, was a good German and all for his German interests, which were those of the Empire and of Austria. He was consequently anti-Prussian—wished well to the house of Catholic Austria. At the same time his Ministers were treating with Protestant Prussia for an

alliance against that Catholic Austria, against Francis of Lorraine, the husband of Maria Theresa and Emperor of Germany.

Fond as were the French Royal Family of Austria, Louis XV. was frightened, and feared to accept the bait held out to him, when the Queen-Empress offered, falsely, the hope of the Low Countries as a kingdom for his daughter the Infanta.

Kaunitz, however, was ready with plenty of arguments to convince Louis of the wisdom of throwing in his lot with Austria against Prussia. These arguments were to the effect that the French and Austrian armies united could overawe Hanover and thus keep the King of England quiet, that Louis XV. could punish Frederick for having laughed at him, and that, instead of Milan, which France had formerly sought to wrest from Austria, it would be better to accept the Austrian Low Countries as a dowry for the Infanta.

This young lady, who was still at Versailles, had firmly renewed her old treaty of alliance with Madame de Pompadour. Neither they nor—the pretty fellow—the frivolous Abbé de Bernis, the gay poet who was now Pompadour's bosom confidant and favourite, pointed out to Louis two very obvious objections to the propositions of Kaunitz. These were that it was only the King of England, not the English people, who could be kept in order by threatening Hanover; and, again, that when the pride of the Prussian King had been punished, it would be Austria alone who would remain in possession of Germany.

The proffered bait of the Netherlands the two ladies and the Abbé de Bernis swallowed wholesale, at all events at first, although the Abbé seems to have had his doubts

later. The negotiations went along merrily enough at Versailles; it was from the side of Vienna that a hitch was to be feared, owing to an unexpected interruption.

Francis of Lorraine, although he had become Emperor of Germany, hitherto had been perfectly content to interfere in his wife's political affairs no further than to become the father of her sixteen children. He, however, now for once put a spoke into the political wheel of Maria Theresa, by resenting greatly the idea of a great Princess like his wife making use as an intermediary of a woman like Madame de Pompadour.

"What!" he exclaimed, "use a woman of that character!—a *bourgeoise* too, and one whose father, Poisson, was hanged (in effigy) for fraudulent conduct having to do with supplies of meat, or something low of that kind. All that would not be so bad if she were only devout, but it is notorious upon what terms she is with the Church. I really must ask you, my dear pious Maria Theresa, if you have considered how the good name of a respectable mother of sixteen children like yourself will suffer by being bandied about in connection with that of a Marquise de Pompadour?"

These remonstrances on the part of the Emperor were soon communicated to Madame de Pompadour, who instantly endeavoured to put herself in the necessary condition of grace by making friends with the Jesuits.

Here the difficulty was the Dauphin! The Père de Sacy, now the King's confessor, had, after some trimming, with regret to decline to receive the confession of the King's mistress, for fear of offending the King's son and heir. To the amusement of Versailles, Pompadour, however, made an open parade of conversion, by erecting for herself a tribune or gallery in

the most fashionable convent of penitence then in Paris. This was the convent of the Capucins in the Place Vendôme.

When the news of this good action travelled to Vienna, the husband of Maria Theresa expressed himself as being perfectly satisfied with this sign of amendment; he had no longer any objection to his honourable wife's employment of Madame de Pompadour in any way she pleased for the advantage of Austrian and Imperial interests. The mistress of Louis XV., being thus whitewashed, the negotiations were without further delay forwarded to her direct by Maria Theresa, for her signature on behalf of France.

If this did not place the nominal daughter of the dishonest clerk Poisson—the supposed daughter of her husband d'Étioles' uncle, Lenormant de Tourneheim—in the actual position of Queen of France, it must be conceded that it was something very like it.

The handsome Abbé de Bernis, who was at this time the lover of the Infanta, represented that Princesse at the meeting which took place in a pavilion in the grounds of the château of Bellevue on September 22nd, 1755. The other signatories were the Ambassador Stahremberg on behalf of Austria, and Pompadour for France. The Austrian repeated the promise of the Low Countries for the King's daughter and her husband Don Philip, and pointed out the future advantage to be gained by the accomplishment of Louise Élisabeth's desires, the marriage of her little daughter Isabelle to young Joseph of Austria. All the Austrian and all the Imperial dominions thus were promised in prospective to the Infanta's child. The mother's ambition could not ask for more; to gain it what cared she how many thousands of lives

should be sacrificed! An extra bait for Louis XV. was the promise, made on behalf of Austria, to maintain the line of the Elector of Saxony, the Dauphin's father-in-law, hereditary in the Monarchy of Poland, instead of allowing that Monarchy ever again to become elective. Thus Louis XV., through his son and his daughter, would see in himself the progenitor or protector of Kings and Emperors from one end of Europe to the other.

The gay Abbé, François de Bernis, Comte de Lyon, had in addition to his pleasing countenance, graceful manners, amiable disposition, and talent for making verses, but little to recommend him except the favour of Madame de Pompadour. She made of him an Ambassador, a member of the King's Council, and eventually a Cardinal; she also made of him more than a friend. He seems, however, to have shown some common sense in this meeting with Stahremberg, scenting a trap and seeing the liar through the Austrian, who made so many brilliant promises that they seemed almost impossible of realisation. Although the disastrous consequences of the treaty were afterwards imputed to him, he declined at the first meeting to sign it, or to allow Pompadour to sign it entirely in secret, and, as it were, in spite of the Dauphin, but insisted that the Ministers should first be made acquainted with its provisions. Consequently, as might have been expected, there was considerable discussion over those provisions. Especially did M. de Machault point out the folly of plunging into an European war just to oblige Maria Theresa, insisting that France should at the most restrict herself to maritime operations. Bernis had not the courage to draw back, upon his own

responsibility alone, after having been in a great measure the cause of matters having gone so far. He would, however, have liked Madame de Pompadour to take upon herself the onus of drawing back, and pointed out to her what a fearful step she was taking. She, but a weak woman already faded and debilitated by constant suffering, was about, with her feeble hand, to attempt to steer the ship of Europe through an awful sea of blood! She was about to seize this rudder, moreover, in face of a France already angry and irritated against her and against the King, a France on the verge of revolution, that desired to give over no more of its sons to death for the personal aggrandisement of a Monarchy which it despised and detested.

But Pompadour, while realising all this, also feared the Bastille, which might be even now awaiting her should she show herself weak. Thus she, not by nature cruel, felt herself driven in this crisis to act as a tyrant. While yet hesitating and fearful, her fears were skilfully acted upon. She was told that the King was about to replace her by another *grande dame* as mistress; that she would surely lose that power which had become so dear to her—nay, more, that she would be disgraced, humiliated; that after having been sought out for the confidences of an Empress, she would become the laughing-stock and byword of all Europe. While thus in doubt and trembling, there arrived to her a letter from the Empress commencing with the words "*Chère amie, cousine*"!

Thus did Maria Theresa lower herself to the courtesan of the King of France! Is it to be wondered at if a woman who from her earliest childhood had deliberately aimed at gaining the disgraceful situation she obtained,

who had deserted a loving husband, in spite of his prayers, to occupy it, who, to retain it, had just given the King his *parc aux cerfs*, and procured him the young women to occupy it for his pleasures, should prove wanting in moral courage when a great Empress claimed her as "a dear friend and cousin"? No, it is not to be wondered at—seeing what the woman was—if the Marquise yielded and the alliance with Austria was made.

In spite of the King's wishes that it should be an offensive alliance, Bernis and Pompadour limited it cautiously to a defensive alliance, and made the provision, afterwards ignored, that France should send only 24,000 men.

The Ministers, however, anxious not to break with Prussia, insisted, almost in spite of the King, in sending an embassy to Frederick. The attempt at friendship was made too late. When they offered him as a present the island of Tobago in the Antilles, Frederick mocked at them, talked about Don Quixote, and asked if they thought that he wanted Sancho Panza's island of Barataria! As a matter of fact, Frederick, who before long was about to perform such deeds as well merited the title which he earned of "The Great," had already signed a treaty against France with England.

If the Emperor Francis of Lorraine had been annoyed when the Empress first made use of Pompadour to gain her ends, when he learned about the letter beginning "Dear friend, Cousin," his fury knew no bounds. He became like a madman—broke several chairs in his fury—and told his enormous wife that she would be the laughing-stock of London. In this he proved correct, for an indecent and monstrous effigy of Maria Theresa, in

the act of receiving the birch, was paraded all through the streets of the English capital. The excuse which the Empress gave to her husband was a feeble one, "I write in that way to Farinelli." This was a celebrated tenor who was highly respected. The Emperor declined to see any comparison between a letter to Farinelli and one to the Marquise de Pompadour.

CHAPTER VI

The Wonderful Comte de Saint-Germain

In those days when Madame de Pompadour was the reigning favourite of Louis XV., there was no more extraordinary person at the Court of France than he who called himself the Comte de Saint-Germain. Madame du Hausset, the lady-in-waiting and *femme de chambre* of the King's mistress, has left in her Memoirs some very interesting details concerning this mysterious individual, who endeavoured to cause it to be believed that he had lived for several centuries.

One day Madame de Pompadour, who was making her toilette with the assistance of Madame du Hausset, inquired of the Comte, who was looking on, "What kind of a King was François I., and how was he made? I think that I could have loved him."

As François I. had been dead for some two centuries and more, the courtesan of Louis the Well-Beloved no doubt thought to take the Comte de Saint-Germain at a disadvantage, but if so she was mistaken.

"He was indeed very amiable," he replied, and proceeded to give a most accurate description of his person and appearance. "The fault of François I.," the Comte continued, "was that his temperament was too ardent. I could have given him some good advice upon that score, if he would only have listened to me;

but he would not. That is the worst of Princes, they seem fated to close their ears—at any rate, those of their minds—to the best of counsels. But the Court of François I. was very fine, although that of his grandsons François II., Charles IX., and Henri III. infinitely surpassed it; while in the time of Marie Stuart and Marguerite de Valois it was a land of enchantment, a regular temple of the pleasures, not forgetting those of the mind. The two Queens were both well learned, and made verses which it was a delight to listen to."

Not unnaturally, the fair Marquise laughed to hear the Comte de Saint-Germain talk like this, and twitted him upon his speaking as if he had personally witnessed all that he described. He, however, declined to agree to the fact that he only pretended to have lived for centuries, saying, that it amused him to let people think what they liked, and if they thought that he had existed from ancient times, he merely did not take the trouble to contradict them—that was all.

"But," remarked Madame de Pompadour, "that is all very well—yet you do not give us your age. The Comtesse de Gergy was fifty years ago wife of the Ambassador at Venice, and she says that she knew you then exactly as you are to-day."

"Yes, that is quite true; I knew the Comtesse very well in Venice."

"Well, according to her, you must be at the very least a hundred years old now?"

"Perhaps I am—it is quite possible," answered Saint-Germain, laughing; "but perhaps the lady, on the other hand, talks nonsense."

"Well, she declares that you gave her a wonderful elixir which preserved for her the appearance of being

only twenty-four years old for years. Why do you not give a similar one to the King ? "

" May heaven forefend ! Madame, that I should practise on His Majesty with unknown drugs ! Why, I should be crazy ! " answered the Comte ; and in this reply he showed his excellent sense.

The King, who had heard a good deal about the power which Saint-Germain was supposed to possess of causing flaws to disappear from diamonds, wished to learn something of this secret. A few days after the above conversation, when Louis XV. met the Comte, who was again in the apartments of the Marquise, he said, " Comte, will you help me to gain 4,000 francs ? I have got here a diamond with a flaw, and it has been valued at 6,000. Without the spot it would be worth 10,000." And the King, after having had the jewel carefully weighed, handed it over.

Saint-Germain looked the stone well over, after which he replied : " It is possible, if your Majesty will let me have the stone for a month " ; and he took the diamond away. A month later he brought the stone back again—it was without a flaw, and upon being weighed but the faintest difference was discernible.

The King entrusted the diamond to the Duc de Gontaut to sell for him, which that nobleman did for 9,600 francs ; but the King sent for it back again, to keep it as a curiosity. Louis could not get over his surprise, saying that with the secrets that he possessed the Comte de Saint-Germain must be worth millions, especially if he knew how to make big diamonds out of small ones. To this remark M. de Saint-Germain made no reply—only saying that he most certainly

could make pearls larger and make them of a finer water.

After this both the King and Madame de Pompadour always treated the Comte with great consideration; while the doctor of the Marquise, M. Quesnay, who was an intimate friend of Madame du Hausset, assured that lady that, if pearls resulted from a disease of the oyster, it was quite possible that the Comte might have the secret of the principle of that disease. "Nevertheless," added the excellent Quesnay, "he is a charlatan, with his elixir of life and pretence of fabulous age, although the King is infatuated with him and always treats him as one of illustrious birth."

In appearance the Comte de Saint-Germain had the air of a man of fifty, was neither fat nor thin, looked intellectual, and dressed with taste, at any rate after the custom of that day. He always wore splendid diamonds upon his fingers, carried a snuff-box encrusted with magnificent stones, and a watch similarly decorated. Upon one occasion, when the Court of Louis XV. was in full dress, he appeared in the Marquise de Pompadour's apartments attired in a manner to dazzle the ex-Madame d'Étioles. Nevertheless, from the days of her youth as Mademoiselle Poisson, the *bourgeoise* favourite had been accustomed to the display of wealth in the houses of her connections the farmers-general Pâris and, her supposed father, Lenormant de Tourneheim. On this evening the Comte wore shoe-buckles and garters of such splendid appearance that Madame de Pompadour said that she doubted if the King had any like them. At her request M. de Saint-Germain took them off that she might examine them closely, when the Duc de Gontaut, who was present, said that they were worth

From an engraving after the picture by de la Tour.

MARIE JOSEPHA OF SAXONY,
The second wife of the Dauphin.

at the least 200,000 francs. He also carried upon this occasion a snuff-box of incalculable value, and sleeve-links of rubies which were dazzling.

Madame du Hausset says, "One did not know how this man was so rich—so extraordinary—and the King would not allow him to be spoken of with disdain or raillery. They say he is a bastard of the King of Portugal."

One day when the Marquise was ill—a by no means uncommon experience with her, owing to her delicate lungs and weak heart—the Comte de Saint-Germain came in to amuse her. To entertain the invalid, he brought out of his pocket a box full of the most beautiful topazes, rubies, and emeralds, which were simply dazzling to behold. Madame du Hausset, standing behind his back, made a sign to the King's favourite to the effect that they were all false; but, among a quantity of fine rubies, he flung disdainfully on one side a little cross set with diamonds and emeralds. "That is not to be despised!" remarked the waiting-lady. "Keep it then," said the Comte, and insisted upon her doing so, although she endeavoured to refuse. She kept it accordingly, and Madame du Hausset, taking the trinket to be valued, found that it was by no means a sham. The jeweller estimated the little cross at 1,500 livres. Not to be outdone in his attentions to her lady-in-waiting, Madame de Pompadour shortly afterwards presented M. de Saint-Germain with an enamel-box. Upon the box was an ancient Greek sage, which the Marquise said was intended as a comparison with his own wisdom.

THE COMTE'S STORY

The Comte de Saint-Germain was, it seems, an excellent *raconteur*, and one day, after having been pressed

by the Marquise de Pompadour to do so, he related to her, to the Duc de Gontaut, and to other persons, the circumstances of an occurrence said to have come under his personal notice some fifty or sixty years earlier. We will give the Comte's story in his own words, as, after having told it, he wrote it out and sent it to Madame de Pompadour.

. . . . . .

At the beginning of this Century [the Eighteenth] the Marquis de Saint-Gilles was the Spanish Ambassador at The Hague. In his youth the Marquis had known the Comte de Moncade, a grandee of Spain, and one of the richest nobles of that country. Some months after his arrival at The Hague he received a letter from the Comte, which, invoking his friendship, begged him to render the writer a signal service. This letter ran as follows :

" You are well aware, my dear Marquis, of my grief in not being able to perpetuate the name of Moncade ; it pleased Heaven, however, a short time after I had left you, to answer my prayers and to grant me a son. He early developed inclinations worthy of his birth, but, unfortunately, he fell in love, at Toledo, with the most famous actress of the troupe of comedians of that city.

" I closed my eyes to this indiscretion on the part of a youth who had, until then, given me naught but satisfaction. But having learned that his passion carried him to the point of desiring to marry this girl, and that he had given her a written promise to that effect, I begged the King to cause him to be shut up. My son, learning what I was about, forestalled the effect of my proceedings,

and fled with the object of his passion. For more than six months I have been ignorant of his whereabouts, but I have reason to believe that he is at The Hague."

After this, the Comte begged the Marquis, in the name of their old friendship, to make the closest search to discover his son, and to persuade him to return.

"It is right," he continued, "to make a provision for this girl if she consents to return the letter of promise of marriage which she had given to her, and I leave you the master to stipulate concerning her interests, also to settle the sum necessary to enable my son to return to Madrid in a state befitting his condition. I do not know if you yourself are a father, but if you are, you will well be able to understand my great anxieties."

To this letter the Comte added an exact description of his son and his attractive mistress. No sooner had the Marquis de Saint-Gilles received this letter than he sent to all the inns in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague; but in vain: he could discover nothing.

Almost reduced to despair at his want of success, he thought of employing a very smart young French page, promising him a reward if he succeeded in finding out the person about whom he had become so interested. He gave the page the description of the son of the Comte de Moncade, but for some days, although searching in all sorts of places, he failed to discover any one resembling the son of the Spanish grandee. At length, one evening at the theatre, the page saw a young man and woman in a box, and he noticed that, perceiving themselves to be closely observed, they withdrew to the back of the box. Thereupon he had no doubt but that he had found the right persons. He kept his eyes upon

the occupants of the box, watching to see if there was any movement within, until near the close of the piece, when he placed himself in the passage which led from the boxes to the door of the theatre.

He noticed that in coming out the young man, while passing before him, and noticing the dress which he wore as a page of the Spanish Embassy, endeavoured to conceal his features by putting his handkerchief to his mouth. Without appearing to do so, the page followed him to the inn called the Vicomte de Turenne, where he saw him enter with the young woman. Sure then of having discovered what he wanted, he hurried off quickly to carry tidings to the Ambassador.

Instantly the Marquis de Saint-Gilles, draped in a black cloak, and followed by his page and two servants, hurried to the Vicomte de Turenne. Upon arriving at the inn, he demanded of the host where was situated the chamber of the young gentleman and lady who had been for some time past lodging under his roof.

At first the master of the hostelry made some difficulties about conducting him unless he could ask for them by their name. The page thereupon warned him to be careful—that he was addressing the Ambassador of Spain, who had serious reasons for speaking to these persons. The innkeeper replied that they did not wish to be known, and they had forbidden him to allow any one to visit them who should not name them. Nevertheless, from consideration for the Ambassador, he pointed out the chamber—conducting him to the very top of the house to one of his worst rooms.

The Marquis knocked at the door, but there was a considerable delay in opening. After knocking again, the door was at length half opened, when, at the aspect

of the Ambassador and his suite, he who had opened wished to close it again, saying that there must be some mistake.

The Ambassador pushed the door forcibly, entered, and made a sign to his people to await him outside. When thus alone obtaining admission, he found before him a young man with a very handsome face, of which the features exactly corresponded with those which had been described to him. With him was a young woman, beautiful and exceptionally well formed, also corresponding, by the colour of her hair, by her figure, and the turn of her face, to she who had been portrayed to him by his friend the Comte de Moncade.

The young man was the first to speak, complaining of the violence which had been employed to enter the apartment of a foreigner, who was in a free country, and who was living there under its laws.

The Ambassador replied, while advancing to embrace him, "There is no question here of making pretence, my dear Comte. I know you, and I do not come here to cause you trouble, nor to this young lady, who appears to me most interesting."

The young man replied that it was an error, that he was no Comte, but the son of a merchant of Cadiz, that the young lady was his wife, and that they were travelling for their pleasure.

The Ambassador, throwing his eyes over the room, which was very poorly furnished, and the mean baggage scattered about it, replied, "My dear child—permit me this title, which is authorised by my affection for your father—is it in such surroundings as these that the son of the Comte de Moncade should dwell?"

The young man, however, still declared that such language was incomprehensible to him. At last, conquered by the insistence of the Ambassador, he avowed, with tears, that he was the son of M. de Moncade, but declared that he would never return to his father if he would have to abandon a young woman whom he adored with his whole soul.

The beautiful young actress, on the other hand, bursting into tears, threw herself at the feet of the Marquis de Saint-Gilles, declaring that she would not be the cause of the ruin of the young Comte ; and her generosity, or, rather, her love, conquering her own interests, she consented, she said, for the sake of his happiness alone, to separate herself from him.

The Ambassador admired such noble disinterestedness ; but the young fellow, driven desperate by it, reproached his mistress, refusing to abandon her, and to turn against such an estimable person the sublime generosity of her own heart. The Marquis, however, told her that the intention of the Comte de Moncade was not to make her unhappy, announcing that he had been charged to place at her disposal a sum suitable to enable her to return to Spain, or live in such place as she might desire. He told her that the nobility of her sentiments and the evidence of her unselfish tenderness inspired him with the greatest interest in her, and, accordingly, he was determined to make this sum as high as possible. He promised her ten thousand florins—about thirty thousand francs—which he said should be paid down so soon as she should have given up the promise of marriage which had been given to her, and the young Comte should have taken up his residence under the roof of the Ambassador, and given his promise to return to Spain.

The beautiful girl, drowned in her tears, appeared to take no notice of these remarks, thinking only of her lover, of the grief of leaving him, of the cruel sacrifice to which her own devotion caused her to become the voluntary victim. Taking out from a little pocket-book the promise of marriage signed by the son of the Comte de Moncade, she exclaimed, "I know his good heart too well to have any need for it." Kissing the paper several times, with a sort of transport, she handed it over to the Ambassador, who stood astonished to see such greatness of soul. He vowed to the unhappy young creature that he would ever interest himself in her career, while, at the same time, he assured to the Comte his father's forgiveness.

"He will," he said, "receive with open arms the prodigal son returned to the bosom of his despairing family; the heart of a father is a fathomless mine of tenderness. What will be the happiness of my friend, afflicted for so long past, upon receipt of this news! and how happy also does the instrument of his friend's felicity find himself!"

The young man seemed touched keenly by the Ambassador's remarks; the diplomatist, however, fearing lest love should regain her empire, and triumph over the lady's generous resolutions, determined, if possible, not to leave him that night in her company. Accordingly, he begged him repeatedly to accompany him at once to his hôtel.

It would be difficult to portray the grief, the tears, the cries of sorrow which this cruel separation caused. They sensibly affected the kind heart of the Marquis de Saint-Gilles, who repeated his promises of protection to the young lady upon causing the Comte's slim baggage

to be carried off, and himself to accompany him to the Spanish Embassy.

That evening the youth found himself installed in the most splendid apartment which could be given to him by the Ambassador, who was delighted at having been the means of restoring the heir of the illustrious house of Moncade to all its grandeurs and magnificent domains.

Upon arising on the morrow of this fortunate day, the young Comte found himself surrounded by tailors, dealers in haberdashery and laces, and so on; he had but to choose all that he required. Two *valets de chambre* and three lackeys, chosen by the Ambassador, awaited his pleasure in the ante-chamber.

This nobleman showed the young Comte the letter which he had already written to his father, in which he congratulated the Comte de Moncade upon possessing a son whose sentiments and qualities were equal to the nobility of his blood. He also announced the immediate return of his son. Nor, in his letter, had the Ambassador forgotten to accord full justice to the interesting young lady; he avowed having partly to thank her generosity for the submission of her lover. Under these circumstances he did not doubt but that the Comte de Moncade would fully approve of his gift to her of ten thousand florins. This sum was remitted to that noble and interesting person that same day, when, despite her grief, she did not delay her departure, sacrificing herself to her love.

The preparations for the voyage of the young Comte were also soon made. A magnificent outfit with an excellent carriage were sent for him on board a fine ship at Rotterdam about to sail for France, from

which country the young man was to travel by land to Spain.

Upon himself embarking he was supplied with a considerable sum of money and letters of change for an additional large amount in Paris. The adieux between the Ambassador and the young *seigneur* who had been his guest were most touching when the moment of parting came.

With impatience the Marquis de Saint-Gilles awaited the reply of the Comte de Moncade, and, putting himself in his place, he rejoiced at his old friend's pleasure. At the expiration of four months he received the reply so anxiously expected, and one could with difficulty paint his surprise when he read the following lines:

"Heaven, my dear Marquis, has never accorded to me the satisfaction of being a father; and, loaded with riches and honours, the sorrow of having no heirs, and of seeing an illustrious race terminate in my own person, has filled my life with bitterness. I see with extreme sorrow that your Excellency has been deceived by a young adventurer, who has played upon his knowledge of our former friendship. But your Excellency should not be allowed to be the dupe. It has been, indeed, the Comte de Moncade whom you have obliged, and he should acquit that which your generous friendship has advanced with the intention of procuring him a pleasure which he would indeed have deeply appreciated. I hope, therefore, Monsieur le Marquis, that your Excellency will make no difficulty about accepting the remittance contained in this letter of the sum of three thousand louis de France, of which I received notification from you."

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The manner in which the Comte de Saint-Germain

caused the young adventurer, his mistress, and the Spanish Ambassador to speak and behave, brought tears and laughter by turns to the eyes of Madame de Pompadour and the other listeners to the tale as told by that remarkable man. Nevertheless, those who heard his story were all convinced that it was true in every particular, and that the young adventurer had, moreover, displayed more cleverness and address than even the celebrated Gusman d'Alfarache.

CHAPTER VII

The Seven Years' War

1756

When the Seven Years' War officially commenced in 1756, France was practically without money, without Ministers, without Generals, and without credit. While the Comte d'Argenson and his colleagues, de Puysieux and de Séchelles, are described in his journal by the Marquis d'Argenson "as old, worn-out invalids with worn-out brains," Pompadour, the reigning Queen, was about to get rid even of them, to replace them by a pack of ignorant clerks.

From the commencement of her reign the Marquise showed her incapacity, her weakness. Voltaire called her *la grisette*. With reference to this, a French writer of the last century says, "*La grisette*—it is too much! The brave grisette of Paris, whom our travellers have so often found in the midst of perilous adventures, even as far as the thrones of the Orient, is a different creature." By this remark reference is clearly intended to Marie Petit, mistress of Fabre, the Ambassador to Persia, who, when Fabre died, dressed herself in his clothes and, personating him, completed the embassy alone, deceiving the Shah. To continue, "She, Madame de Pompadour, with a forced education which had taught her like a

monkey, never rose higher than the level of an agreeable *femme de chambre*, who, possessing some little talents, can serve as a lining to the theatres of society. Servile, impertinent, from both sides she possessed this groundwork of domesticity. A consumptive songstress and colourless kept woman, faded from the beginning, soft, she was only fit to enervate, loosen, dilute, spoil everything, make everything unclean and unhealthy." The same writer elsewhere describes the Marquise as, "*entremetteuse et racoleuse, pourvoyeuse de petites filles.*"

Fifteen years after the death of Cardinal Fleury it was far more evident even than in his day that what Louis had falsely exclaimed when he died was now actually true. "*Plus d'hommes en France!*" Such had been the outcry of the indolent Monarch, who had for so many years allowed the country to be ruled for him by an indolent and untrustworthy priest.

Now there were indeed no men in France—no Generals. That brilliant foreigner the Maréchal de Saxe had died from his excesses, and the only two remaining Maréchals were the once able and brave Belleisle, or Belle-Isle, Duc de Vernon, now too old, and the vain-glorious *roué* the Duc de Richelieu. This latter, at the age of fifty-five, was as great a libertine as ever, and so he would continue until he died at the age of ninety-two! Famous, owing to the part which he had assigned to himself as having enacted at the battle of Fontenoy in 1745—by which, if true, he had gained the day for France—he had recently made himself even more notorious by the manner in which he had conducted a love intrigue with Madame de la Popelinière. The pleasure-loving Parisians were, in a way, proud of the amorous exploits of this *grand seigneur*, and the story of Richelieu and

Madame de Popelinière had but enhanced the unsavoury reputation of this dissolute debauchee. It was the joke of all France.

The story was simple enough. The husband having forbidden Richelieu to visit his wife, the Duc de Richelieu purchased the house next door. There, in a room next to the wall of the lady's bedchamber, he contrived to have constructed a movable back to a fireplace. By sliding this iron plate to one side the lovers were enabled to visit each other at will. Since even models of "Madame de Popelinière's fireplace" were being openly sold in Paris, it is probable that Richelieu personally made public the details about himself and his partner in this intrigue. It was the way of this despicable rake almost invariably to make known the names of the ladies whose favours he enjoyed, but that fact made him none the less popular with the fair sex. In those immoral days, for a lady not to have been the mistress of the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu was indeed to be wanting in one of the principal Court distinctions.

Such were the times, and such was the man upon whom—by the grace of Madame de Pompadour—was before long to devolve the chief command of the armies of France.

In recommending this appointment to the King, the Marquise, usually antagonistic to the vaunting Richelieu, was acting upon the advice of a new man at the Court, with whom for years she was to be associated, one the more firmly wedded to Austrian traditions and interests since he came from Lorraine, like the Emperor himself. This was the Comte de Stainville, afterwards known as the Duc de Choiseul.

Born in 1719, by the age of thirty-seven Etienne

François de Stainville had, by the favour of Madame de Pompadour, already become a Lieutenant-General in the army, and been sent on embassies to Rome and Vienna. By the year 1758 she had made of him Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Duc et Pair de France. Three years later she helped him to the united positions of Minister of War and Minister of Marine.

The Comte de Stainville, or, to speak of him by his better-known title, the Duc de Choiseul, was the brother of the handsome and designing Duchesse de Grammont, and he made a great parade of being himself in love with his beautiful sister. When he became the first man in the Kingdom, it was the fashion of all the fools at the Court to imitate him in this respect. All professed their loves for their sisters, thinking thereby to gain the favour of M. de Choiseul.

A remark on this subject, made by the Duc d'Ayen, son of the Maréchal de Noailles, to Madame de Pompadour is amusing. "I should very much like to be in the fashion, but which sister should I select? Madame de Caumont is the devil incarnate; Madame de Villars a pot-hunting sister; Madame d'Armagnac a bore; Madame de la Marck a crazy woman!"

"Nice family portraits!" replied the Marquise; while the Duc de Gontaut laughed to fits at the apt descriptions of the distinguished ladies, and the Marquis de Marigny, Pompadour's brother—who so sensibly always refused to be made a Minister—observed, "Well, at all events, my little sister knows that, without making any fuss about it, I always loved her tenderly before the arrival of Madame de Grammont and all her train.

Another nobleman present vehemently declared his adoration for his sister, Madame du Roure. This noble

was known at the Court by the ridiculous name of the White Eunuch. He was the privileged tame cat of Madame de Pompadour's household, and admitted to amuse her when she was sick, as he was a good *conteur*, and had the merit of never asking anything either for himself or for his relations. He considered it obligatory upon him, however, to be in the prevailing fashion.

The war with England began by Rouillé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, demanding from George II. satisfaction for past affronts, and the return of all the ships-of-war and merchantmen seized by British ships in peace time. George refusing to comply with this just demand, on January 23rd, 1756, English ships in French ports were seized, and war began.

During the years of preliminary squabblings France had contrived somehow to get a fleet together; but the weak M. de Séchelles succumbed under the frantic efforts to which he was reduced in order to obtain money. In March, 1756, the doctors declared the Minister who had replaced Machault in the Finances to be suffering from *apoplexy of the memory!*—a new disease invented by them to avoid having to say that he had become crazy. In April this Minister gravely informed the King that he had "excellent reports from the Maréchal de Lowendhal," when that warlike compatriot of Saxe had already been dead for a year! Not a day too soon, M. de Séchelles was retired. His son-in-law Moras was given the Finances, and a large pension conferred upon his son M. d'Hérault—more waste of the public money! While in May the old Maréchal de Belle-Isle became a Member of the Council of State, in that same month the war commenced—by a victory for France, indeed, a series of victories for France in the Mediterranean.

Although Pompadour had no doubt hoped that the Duc de Richelieu would not distinguish himself, this dissipated man of pleasure succeeded in coupling his name with practically the only successful events during the Seven Years' War.

Sent with 19,000 men on board a strong fleet commanded by M. de la Galissonnière from Toulon in April, Richelieu attacked that important island Minorca, held by the English. These, having evacuated Ciudadela and Port Mahon, had been forced to take refuge in the strong citadel of Fort Philip, which the French bombarded. A small English fleet of ten ships, under Admiral Byng, arrived and attacked the squadron of la Galissonnière, who defeated Byng, that Admiral making but a poor fight and retreating to Gibraltar to refit. The losses on board the French fleet were only thirty-seven killed and a hundred and seventy-five wounded. For his too prudent conduct in this action Byng was tried by court-martial and shot, as the French said, "*pour encourager les autres*." In England it has generally been considered that the unfortunate Byng was basely sacrificed by the Ministry to cover their own disgraceful neglect of proper preparations for the war. Not only Voltaire, but Richelieu also sent protests to London to endeavour to prevent the Admiral's execution.

French reports of this action, however, give the numbers of Byng's ships not as ten ships-of-the-line only, but as thirteen ships and twenty frigates. On the other hand, while the English said that Richelieu landed 19,000 men in Minorca, the French credit him with only having had 12,000 troops in the island. The feeble garrison of Fort Philip, which was without either

captains or subalterns, held out, hoping to see Byng return, and made a vigorous defence, especially as Byng was conveying their engineer and other officers.

By degrees one fort after another was gallantly stormed by the Maréchal de Richelieu's troops, among whom, however, there was a great deal of drunkenness, owing to the quantity of strong Spanish wine available. By June 28th General Blakeney, the eighty-year-old English Commander, found his supplies of stores and ammunition short, and his remaining works were bravely forced by the enemy. He surrendered to Richelieu, and he, his only assistant, the gallant Lieutenant-Colonel Jeffrys, and his garrison became prisoners of war, to the immense joy of the French nation. Both the French army and navy had indeed, by this glorious commencement of the war, avenged the numerous insults from which the country had been compelled to suffer in time of peace.

As France now also seized upon Corsica in the name of her ally the Republic of Genoa, she was mistress of a considerable part of the Mediterranean. It would, therefore, have been far wiser policy to have been satisfied with the maritime contest with England, instead of foolishly undoing all the old policy of Henri Quatre and of Cardinal Richelieu by fighting for Austria on land.

The King of Prussia had, however, by his coarse and biting pleasantries, bitterly offended the Marquise de Pompadour; he had also given vent very plainly to his opinion of the character of Elizabeth, the Empress of Russia; nor, again, had Frederick neglected to say what he thought about Augustus III., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. Thus Russia and Saxony, as well as France, joined the coalition against Frederick.

His former ally, Sweden, also went over to French interests.

The effect of Richelieu's victory was great in Paris, although, with characteristic ingratitude, Louis received the returning Duc coldly, his sole remark being, " Well, M. le Maréchal, how did you find the figs in Corsica ? "

The King, trampling down all resistances, forced the Parliament to register every impost that he had ever asked for, while, in addition, compelling the men of the robe to register the edict that the payment of these taxes should be continued for " ten years after peace should be signed." He took Adélaïde, the Queen, and the Dauphin to the Parliament to witness his triumph upon this occasion, installing them in a gallery, after the Turkish fashion, behind a wire gauze screen. This act of triumph was celebrated by Louis on August 21st, 1756.

It is from this epoch, that of the commencement of the Seven Years' War, that dates the right of King Frederick II. of Prussia to be called " the Great." For, strange as it may seem, this ruler of a but newly consolidated kingdom, consisting of the Electorate of Brandenburg and the ancient Duchy of Borussia, or Prussia, had become the defender of the liberties of Europe. He it was who protected the rights of the Empire, while upholding liberty of conscience, and also Protestantism. His jealousies of Voltaire, as a rival man of letters to himself, he now cast valiantly behind him, making reparation for having burned a book of the poet's by once more honouring him in Berlin. The spiteful and ungrateful Voltaire scarcely merited any reparation, so viciously had he himself behaved towards his former friend and benefactor. Nevertheless, Frederick caused

Voltaire's *Mérope* to be performed at the Opera; he also sent his sister to the poet, to caress him and crown him with favours and distinctions.

Surrounded with immense perils as he was, with all of Europe against him, cheerfully and with a song upon his lips this literary Monarch, who wrote poems in his tent at night on a battlefield, set forth to deal with his numerous foes in turn. There was no fear of Frederick wasting any time. Once he had realised that his enemies really wanted war, he determined they should have it; moreover, not where they wanted, but when and where it suited himself.

At the head of his army of from 70,000 to 100,000 men Frederick gaily set forth to enjoy himself in Saxony. He was first in the field as usual, and had a secret document in his pocket which he had purchased from a Saxon clerk. By this, had he had occasion to learn any more of "the league of the women" against him, Frederick would have become fully instructed as to their intentions of dividing among themselves his dominions of Prussia, Brandenburg, and the recently conquered and Protestant Silesia.

This league of four women consisted of Maria Theresa, who hated him furiously, of Elizabeth of Russia, and of Pompadour, now closely united with the wife of the Saxon Augustus, the mother of the Dauphine. This fury, ugly as well as envenomed, was an Austrian; she thirsted for the death of Frederick, and tried everywhere to stir up enemies against him.

The hatred of the Saxon Electress did not extend to the people, consisting almost wholly of Protestants. These Frederick had generously assisted with wheat during a recent famine, and they were grateful. None

the less was Augustus ready with his army to oppose him when Frederick, on the line of march, merely requested leave to pass through his dominions. Refused the passage, Frederick instantly occupied Dresden, surrounded the King Augustus at Pirna, beat off the Austrian Braun, advancing to aid the Saxons at Losowitz, then defeated the Saxons who were trying to cut their way out of Pirna. He took Augustus' whole army prisoners, but disdainfully let Augustus go free, after sending him a chariot full of food daily while in Pirna.

The Saxon army Frederick now proceeded to enrol into his own forces! He levied an enormous military contribution from Saxony, and, as the discomfited Elector was seeking refuge in his kingdom of Poland, Frederick sent him back all the standards he had taken, with a friendly note in which he pleasantly wished Augustus *bon voyage*! Not contented with the returned flags, Augustus asked that his Guards might be returned also. "Sorry!" replied Frederick, "but I should just have the trouble of taking them back again."

Hateful and raging, the Electress-Queen remained in Dresden. There Frederick showered every politeness upon this most bitter foe. However, when she seated herself violently upon the strong-box full of papers proving her infamous and treacherous conduct to himself, Frederick had to cease to be polite, and have the lady removed from her seat by force. He took the papers, and caused them to be made known everywhere; while the Electress-Queen almost died from concentrated spite and impotent fury. By the publication of the papers the world saw that Frederick had right on his side.

While making the Saxons pay up freely, Frederick

treated Dresden to fêtes and concerts during the winter 1756–57. Further, like Orpheus of old, the conqueror himself discoursed sweet music to the conquered people. The flute, which in the days of his youth his ferocious father, Frederick William I., used to break over his head, Frederick II. was now able to tootle publicly with spirit and feeling, all unopposed, upon the stage in the captured city.

The Dauphine, mother of Louis XVI., was furious when she heard of the adventure of her mother sitting on the box—of the deadly insult of the hand of the enemy having been laid upon her Royal person. The King, too, was deeply wounded in his pride. After the victories of Minorca, what a come-down for the Royal Family of France!

The effects of this wound to the pride of the Royal Family of France were soon evident. Instead of the 24,000 men of the contract, Louis now provided no less than 45,000 men for the assistance of Austria. The quarrel with England was almost forgotten; the Court of France thought of nothing but revenge on Prussia, which had insulted the grandmother of its future King.

The party of Austria and the priesthood, which had been warring against the Parliament ever since 1748, was now triumphant. The King went from excess to excess, depriving the greater number of the *conseillers* of their salaries, suppressing sixty *conseillers*, and insisting upon the submission to the Pope and blind submission to the will of the King of the remainder. As if that were not enough, all the young *conseillers*, those who had not yet sat for ten years, were deprived of the right to vote. The clergy were declared free from all accusations.

The people at large were white with rage, and instead of talking about the King, people now beneath their breath spoke of "the tyrant."

While thus crushing the Parliament, the private life of Louis XV. became more abominable than ever. The pretty château which Madame de Pompadour had had purchased and embellished for the King, known as the Parc aux Cerfs, was now rarely empty, but usually contained one or two young girls at a time. The maidens who occupied it for a month or so were frequently not above fifteen years of age when they entered, but the same occupants rarely remained there long. When some of these girls became mothers, their infants were endowed with a sum of money; but Madame du Hausset informs us that as a good many of the children died, the same endowment served over and over again.

A woman named Madame Bertrand, usually called *la mère abbesse*, was the superintendent of this horrible institution, and gave out to the unfortunate victims of the Monarch's debauchery that he was a Polish *grand seigneur*, a relation of the Queen. This excuse was given because the King sometimes arrived at the Parc aux Cerfs wearing the *cordon bleu* of the Order of the Holy Ghost, the highest order in the kingdom, which he had not had the time to change.

One young girl, however, found out the identity of this handsome "Polish noble" with whom she had fallen in love. Falling at his feet one day, when she thought herself neglected for a rival, she cried out violently, "Yes, you are the King of all the kingdom; but that would be nothing to me if you were not the King of my heart!" The mother abbess, who was

present, told her that she was mad ; the King, however, calmed her with embraces and kind words.

Madame du Hausset says that this unfortunate young creature was confined in a house for mad women as the result of her discovery.

Despite this atrocity, it was no secret in Paris, during the famine in the year 1757, that starving mothers sold their daughters to go to the Parc aux Cerfs.

CHAPTER VIII

Damiens, the "Assassin"

1757

THE famine in the bitter winter weather of the commencement of 1757 was caused by the war and the terrible "octroi" duties levied upon all food entering Paris. Instead of 24,000 men for Austria, Louis had first levied 45,000; and, by raising troops all the winter and spring, he by degrees got together an army of 100,000 men. For as he had lied to and deceived the Parliament about the clergy, so did he now also lie to and deceive that body about the number of men with which he was purposing to assist Austria.

While thus Louis XV. was selling his country to gratify the pride of his daughters and strongly support the arrangement made between the Empress and "her dear friend and cousin," the Ministers were in no way responsible. M. de Machault had always been against the Austrian policy of the Royal Family, and now his old opponent, Comte d'Argenson, was with him. No more than the Keeper of the Seals did the Minister of War, so long a Court favourite, approve of pouring out like water all the treasure and all the blood of France.

The hatred of France was now concentrated on the head of the King; he felt himself that he went about in danger of assassination, and avoided Paris, always going

round outside the city walls. Everybody who approached his person was now looked upon by Louis with suspicion. Even the nobles were feared, and Adélaïde, who shared her father's fears, suggested the revival of an ancient law of the Middle Ages. One of a similar nature was enacted in 1760, it being to the effect that no one unable to prove his nobility from the year 1400 should approach the King.

Pâris-Duverney, the sturdy old farmer-general, went further than this, saying outright that no nobility could be trusted save one brought up expressly to defend His Majesty. He suggested the formation of a military school of young nobles, to be elevated for the King's protection.

In his fear of the people, Louis now even avoided passing through the streets of a small town like Fontainebleau, and caused a new route to be constructed to the Palace there, which was the resort of the Royal hunting parties every autumn.

He had, indeed, cause to fear the people from various reasons—one of these, that in crushing the Parliament and dismissing, or exiling, quantities of the *conseillers*, all judicial work had come to an end. All of the innumerable poorer hangers-on to the skirts of justice, little clerks, and so on, were out of work and place; they had nothing to do, therefore, but hang about the cafés and talk treason to each other of their King. One of the most frequent subjects of these conversations was the idea which was spread abroad that the King was in a conspiracy to starve the people. He was known to be interested, with a person named Bourret and others, in the wheat traffic, which gave a colour to the accusation.

Another cause of hatred was the Parc aux Cerfs. Public rumour had it that great troops of girls were being purchased for the Royal harem—not less than 1,800, says the Abbé Soulavie. The people, who exaggerated so absurdly in their hatred, said furiously, "The dearer he sells his wheat, the cheaper he is able to buy his girls."

The origin of the Parc aux Cerfs was as follows: Madame Adélaïde having eventually, after a delay of two years, succeeded in establishing herself in the apartment she coveted next to the King's own, her father, before long, began to find his freedom interfered with. He was compelled to put his little models, and other such-like members of his feminine menagerie, up in the garrets at Versailles. There being several of these *grisettes*, including a second Murphy and a young female wigmaker, established thus under the roof of the Palace, they conducted themselves in a disorderly manner. Their running backwards and forwards, girlish shrieks and shouts of noisy laughter, became altogether out of place amid the outward show of rigid etiquette and decorum of the abode of Royalty.

Madame de Pompadour thereupon broached an idea worthy of her depraved imagination, suggesting that the King should take a convent building, and fill it with the young widows of officers who had been killed in the Royal service. It would, she thought, have the appearance of a good work of charity to harbour so many destitute young ladies.

Before the convent idea—which pleased the King—could be carried out, Lugeac, the nephew of Pompadour, and Lebel, the King's valet, who were anxious to make money, after consultation with the Marquise, made

another arrangement. By this they bought and got ready the *petite maison* situated discreetly in a retired district known as the deer park (Parc aux Cerfs). It was purchased on November 25th, 1755, and was sufficiently near to the château of Versailles for the King to resort there furtively whenever he so pleased. But the people were saying, "One must kill him!"

In January, 1757, it was proved that the King's fears for his personal safety were not unjustified. On the 5th of that month, after nightfall, he was descending the staircase of the Marble Court at Versailles, being about to enter his carriage, when he felt himself pushed in the back. It was not until he had entered his carriage that, clapping his hand to his side, Louis found it wet with blood. The man who had done the deed, merely with the small blade of a penknife, stood close by and neither repeated the blow nor attempted to fly. The King, at first showing courage, calmly said, "That drunkard has struck me; arrest him, but do not harm him." The man was Robert François Damiens, a valet of weakened mind who was out of place, the tyranny with which the Parliamentarians had been treated having excited his brain to fever heat. His idea was, he said, not to kill the King, but to "touch him," so that his conscience might be aroused and he should see the evil of his ways and amend them. Damiens had been the servant of the ex-Governor of India, M. de la Bourdonnais, who, as a reward for his services to France, had been confined for three years in the Bastille, which he left ruined only to die broken-hearted. He had also been valet to several members of the Parliament, notably a young *conseiller*, M. Bèze de Lys, who for protesting against the injustice of the *lettres de cachet* was sent

under one himself to a dungeon for several years. The dungeon to which M. Bèze was conducted was one of the hardest in the State, that of the prison of Pierre-Encise, near Lyons.

Damiens had been the witness of this cruel act of injustice, had further witnessed the desolation of several families, the weeping wives seeking to follow their ruined husbands into an exile of starvation, and he not unjustly laid all the doleful persecution of the men of the robe at the door of the Archbishop of Paris, the persecutor of the Jansenists. At first his idea had been merely to warn " the King of things of which he imagined him to be unaware in connection with the priests. For instance, he had once waited at the table of a Jesuit of the Sorbonne, when he heard the clerical *convives* saying that they would like to be " the hangmen and torturers of the Parliamentarians, would with pleasure dip their hands in their blood."

The process of warning the King had, however, already been proved to be dangerous, and of this a hanger-on of the Courts of Justice, like Damiens, was well aware. An unfortunate Jansenist, named Carré de Montgeron, had dearly paid for attempting to warn and touch the King, by falling upon his knees and offering a book to Louis. He was confined in a dungeon for life! It was then that Damiens, more than ever indignant at the miseries and infamies of Paris, determined to touch the unfeeling Monarch in another manner. Louis was then merely a man of forty-seven, he might yet live long enough to amend his ways if only he could be made to feel—a slight wound would do for the purpose, and might turn his thoughts to God and his duties. No one, except the priestly party, wished for the King's

death merely that he might be succeeded by the even more dangerous Dauphin ; many there were, though, who ardently desired the miracle of the King's amendment. To bring about this miracle the unfortunate Damiens determined to constitute himself the arm of God, to strike the blow by which the body should bleed and the soul be saved.

It is not improbable that Damiens sought also to strike at the heart of Madame de Pompadour. One of the last places that he had occupied he had quitted with hatred on both sides. While his mistress and her *femme de chambre*, Henriette, cursed him, pretending to read that he would be hanged from the lines in his hand, Damiens, on departing, threw stones through the windows. This mistress was a young lady who had taken a very aristocratic name which did not belong to her. After four days only of marriage to a clerk of no consequence, the brother of the favourite, the chubby Marquis de Marigny, had carried her off, and installed her in a house in the Rue Grange-Batelière on the right bank of the Seine. Here, witnessing all the feasting and merriment which went on while Paris without was starving, Damiens withdrew into himself, became sulky, and meditated upon the wickedness of the Court, of the King, and of the Marquise de Pompadour, whose gay brother was actually providing the bread which he ate with disgust and loathing.

The manner in which Damiens contrived to approach the King was as follows : On the night of January 4th, 1757, he slept in an inn at Versailles, the King being then at the château of the Trianon not far away in the Park. He said to his hostess that he felt unwell and wished for a surgeon to come and bleed him ; but the

good dame laughed at him for wishing to be bled in such bitter, freezing weather.

He walked about the deserted park, only meeting a poor inventor of a machine, who was waiting for the arrival of the Comte de Noailles with the King, to show it to him. From this man Damiens learned that Louis would be coming over from the Trianon to see Madame Adélaïde, who had a cold. He waited about in the afternoon, got into conversation with the Guards, and, when the King's carriage was at the steps, chatted with the postillions also. When, after dark, the King came down the steps, every one uncovered except Damiens, who kept his hat on his head. According to the evidence given at the trial, the King came down leaning on the arm of Béringhen, his first equerry. Advancing towards the carriage, he felt himself pushed, and said in a mild and ordinary tone, "Some one pushed my back. It is that drunkard there who struck me with his fist."

Damiens never moved, and as no one had seen him give a blow with his penknife, he closed it and put it back in his pocket. It was his hat that attracted attention. One of the Guards said, "Who is that man who keeps his hat on in the presence of the King?" And he knocked his hat to the ground.

The King, just getting into his carriage, said, "Can I have been scratched with a pin?" Putting his hand under his clothes, he withdrew it and found it bloody. Pointing to Damiens, Louis then remarked, "*C'est ce monsieur!* Arrest him, but do not kill him." Then, instead of proceeding in his carriage, the King remounted the steps of the château.

Several of the Guards, aided by the Duc de Richelieu,

threw themselves upon Damiens, dashed him against a pillar, then down upon a bench. They tore all his clothes off him, leaving him naked, bound him, and dragged "the assassin" into the guardhouse. The Duc d'Ayen, Captain of the Body Guard, was there. To him Damiens said, "Yes, I did it; it was for God and for the people."

D'Ayen replied, "It is for religion! What do you mean?"

"I mean that the people perish. My principle of religion is that misery exists over three parts of the kingdom."

A book of prayers and *The Imitation of Christ* and also thirty-one louis were found upon Damiens. D'Ayen accused him of having received the money to strike the blow. To this he replied that he would answer before his judges, but that he wished for no pardon, but to die, like Jesus, in torments. Nevertheless, Damiens said that he had no intention of killing the King, although he could easily have done so had he chosen, as there was a much larger blade in the knife, whereas he had merely used the little blade to make a scratch of a superficial nature. That this was true was proved by what the doctors said, "If he wasn't a King he could go to his business to-morrow."

The King showed himself terribly frightened, and his daughters wept excitedly. The Queen, however, coldly remarked, "Come, come, sire!—calm yourself!" Louis, however, maintained that the blade had been poisoned, and sending for the Dauphin made over the affairs of the kingdom into his hands.

Two messages were sent to Damiens to ask him if the knife was poisoned, when he replied, "No, upon

my soul!" He added that if only the King had hanged four Bishops, his attack upon him would never have taken place, while also repeating, "I executed it alone because I conceived it alone."

This remark greatly irritated members of both the religious or political parties, who arrived or were present in the guardroom. For each wished Damiens to say that he had been acting as the tool of the opposing faction, and to implicate others. Thus, the Duc d'Ayen, son of the Maréchal Duc de Noailles, being of the Jesuit party, thought to make him speak against the Jansenists by pointing to the fire and saying, "Let us roast him!"

The ideas of Machault, the Keeper of the Seals, were those of all Paris, that it had been a blow designed by the Jesuits to kill the King with a view to putting the Dauphin on the throne. The Jesuit College of Saint Louis le Grand, in which Voltaire had received his early education, was menaced by a furious mob. Barbier tells us that the public attitude was so terrifying that the parents of two hundred pupils arrived and rescued their young sons.

Machault, meanwhile, in the guardroom, was guilty of a great act of cruelty. To make Damiens confess that he was the tool of the Jesuits, he gave money to the Guards to heat pincers red-hot and pinch the unfortunate prisoner in the thighs. Damiens howled from agony, but accused Machault. "It is thou who art the miserable wretch! Hadst thou but supported thy party [the Parliament], this would not have happened." Thereupon Machault called for faggots, and was about to have Damiens burned then and there, when the Provost of the Palace of Versailles claimed him as being under his jurisdiction.

While they continued to torture Damiens in various ways, the King was crying loudly for a confessor, "A priest!—a priest!" The chaplain of the servants was the first to hand; to him Louis XV. rapidly poured out the confession of his miserable, wicked soul. When his Jesuit confessor arrived from Paris, the King confessed himself over again.

Here was an opportunity for the Jesuit Père Desmarets, the enemy of Madame de Pompadour. He would only grant absolution upon the condition that the Marquise was sent away. The scene of Père Pérusseau and the Duchesse de Châteauroux, during the King's illness at Metz a dozen years earlier, was played over again. The King made no difficulty about sacrificing Madame de Pompadour. Having received absolution, in the presence of the weeping mob of women, he named his son, whom he had always hated and distrusted, Lieutenant-Général of the kingdom, saying to the Dauphin, "Govern better than I have done!"

It was from fear of the combination of Adélaïde, the Dauphin, and the Jesuits that Louis had lately been using the Trianon, carrying on there all his secret correspondence, so that Adélaïde, from her room next to his at Versailles, could not constantly have access to all his papers. Now, however, in his fear of immediate death, the terror-stricken King gave over to the Comte d'Argenson, the confidential man of this party, the key of the Trianon, that he might go and fetch the papers.

While Madame Adélaïde, who detested the Parisians, maintained that the danger was not over, that the city was full of the accomplices of Damiens, a state of terror prevailed from January 5th to 9th, 1751, at Versailles.

A grotesque and comic event then took place. The

États of Brittany, which had been in revolt over the vexed subject of the payment of "the twentieth," now learning of their King's danger, cried, with tears in their eyes, that they would "accept everything." "Take our goods! take our lives!" cried out these sentimental fools. And they sent to the wounded King a present of—a dressing-gown!

This ridiculous act of devotion moved the Queen to tears, while Adélaïde exclaimed, "Oh, would that I were Bretonne!" Unfortunately, while the dressing-gown was being sent to Versailles by the Estates, the Marquis d'Argenson relates that messengers from Versailles were on their way to arrest two *conseillers* of the Parliament of Brittany. Two of the most respectable magistrates were accordingly roughly seized, bound, and carried off, as the apparent reply to the submissive letter sent with the present to the King. The only crime of these magistrates was that of having spoken with vivacity of the manner in which the *conseillers* of the Parliament of Paris were being treated, and of having proposed to send to intercede for them with the King.

While the King retained his bed, the Dauphin presided at the Council of Ministers. His conduct showed modesty and reserve on all points save one—this was the nature of the Court which was to try the unhappy Damiens. He decided that this trial should be not open and conducted by the members of the downtrodden Parliament who offered themselves, but by a secret Commission headed by several magistrates under Court influences, remnants of the disbanded "*grand' chambre*." This was to stifle the affair, to give it a suspicious appearance. It was agreed, however, in order

to give an appearance of publicity, that extracts of the evidence should be read to the Peers and Princes who would be called to honour the proceedings by their occasional presence. This decision on the part of the Dauphin caused all Paris to say that the crime of Damiens had certainly been inspired by the Jesuits, in order to get rid of the King and put the Dauphin on the throne.

For two months, while undergoing the interrogatories of the *Commissaires* Maupeou, Molé, Pasquier, and Severt, the miserable Damiens was continually tortured, with one torture more horrible than the other. Although he endeavoured to kill himself, but failed, nothing would induce him to say that he had been inspired by any one but himself to commit the deed. Various traps were set for him by a police officer, named Belot, who promised him the King's pardon; but Damiens was clever enough to avoid them, and, moreover, to make Belot look foolish in a public confrontation before the Commission. Day and night Damiens was strapped upon an iron bed, his legs were frequently roasted, and his arms enclosed in iron bands, which cut into not the flesh only, but the bones. Every one was listening to his words, but, with wonderful courage, he said to his gaolers, "They will make me speak only when I lose my brain." When dragged out for examination, he, although strapped to the floor of the room, suffered less than in his dungeon, therefore seemed almost happy and gay, and made witty or impertinent replies.

When Maupeou said, "You were in good houses, you could scarcely feel the miseries of the people," Damiens answered, "What is good only for oneself is good for no one." To the great nobles d'Uzès, de Boufflers, de Noailles, and de Biron, upon all of whom

he had waited, he made chaffy remarks, such as, to Noailles, "Are not your legs cold, monsieur, with those white stockings? You had better get a little closer to the fire." When the Duc de Biron demanded the name of his accomplices, "Perhaps yourself!" Damiens replied, laughing. Of Pasquier, one of the judges, he remarked, "One must acknowledge that M. Pasquier talks well! He talks like an angel, and certainly ought to be made Chancellor."

A great deal of the evidence was kept secret, to the great indignation of the Prince de Conti, who said almost in so many words that this concealment was in order to protect the Jesuits, authors of the crime. Eventually Damiens was sentenced to the most horrible execution that had been heard of in France since the execution, a hundred and forty-seven years earlier, of Ravaillac, the murderer of Henri IV. This was, to be torn with hot pincers, broken on the wheel, to be drawn and quartered by four horses, and his body burned to cinders! The judges were unable to imagine anything more horrible, otherwise, in their zeal, they would doubtless have added it to this fearful sentence. The question was, could the King—could any King in the second half of the eighteenth century—confirm such an awful sentence upon an unfortunate being who had already suffered untold agonies, and whose sole crime had been to scratch—not stab—him with a penknife?

Louis XV. did confirm it, and it was carried out in the presence of many Court ladies who paid to witness the spectacle. Only the executioner showed mercy, when the horses could not tear the four muscular limbs asunder, by asking to be allowed to give a cut at each of the quivering joints and so finish off quicker the agony

of the poor wretch who was but a writhing mass of wounds. Although the proceedings had commenced by the burning on the scaffold of the hand which had struck the blow, the four *Commissaires*, at first, refused to allow the executioner to do anything to shorten the awful sufferings of their miserable victim. They wished to please the King—to let the *grandes dames*, who had paid highly for their windows to witness the ghastly spectacle, have their full money's worth! The executioner, however, eventually had his way, for which he was afterwards punished. Damiens died, *at length*, at a quarter-past six on March 28th, 1757, and the four *Commissaires* were rewarded with pensions by the King.

CHAPTER IX

Pompadour and Frederick the Great

1757

After Louis XV. promised to his Jesuit confessor to send away Madame de Pompadour, Machault, the Keeper of the Seals, took upon himself to inform that lady in a very rough manner of her dismissal from Versailles, where since 1755 her nominal position had been merely that of *Dame du palais* in the Queen's household. No sooner had she learned of the King's attempted assassination than the Marquise was thrown into the greatest state of alarm, passing from fits of fainting to fits of weeping. Everybody came at will in and out of her apartments, either from real interest in her welfare or to see what she looked like, what kind of a face she put upon a matter which was likely to cause her downfall.

The worthy doctor, Quesnay, came often, Saint-Florentin, Duc de Vrillière, the Minister of Prisons, M. de Rouillé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Madame la Duchesse de Brancas, the Abbé de Bernis—all these were also assiduous in their attentions. Only the Comte d'Argenson, with whom she was scarcely friendly, and M. Machault d'Arnouville, with whom she had been on such intimate terms for years past, never came near her on the night of the crime.

Seeing her terrible anxiety, Quesnay took every

opportunity of trying to reassure Madame de Pompadour. He was in constant attendance upon the King, and told her that "if it was any one else than His Majesty he could go to a ball." On the following morning Machault, however, still not arriving, although news was brought that he had been to visit the King, the Marquise in her anxiety cried out, "That, then, is what one calls a friend!"

Eventually the Keeper of the Seals came, and when he entered, all others rose and left. Half an hour afterwards he had gone again—Madame de Pompadour was in tears, and ordered her boxes to be packed, preparatory to removal to Paris. Her friends, the Prince de Soubise, the Duc de Gontaut, Bernis, and some ladies, endeavoured to console her when she informed them that Machault had told her that the priests insisted upon her scandalous dismissal, and advised her to go at once without waiting for such an event. They all abused Machault, and called him a false friend; but this did not mend matters. Not long afterwards the Maréchale Duchesse de Mirepoix came in. She was by birth of the Lorraine family of Beauvau-Craon, and a firm friend of Madame de Pompadour. She exclaimed, "Why, what is the meaning of all these boxes? Your people say that you are leaving at once!"

"Alas! yes, the Master wills it so, my dear friend; at least, so says Machault," replied Pompadour.

"And what does Machault say himself?"

"He tells me to go instantly."

"Your fine Keeper of the Seals wants to be the master himself," said Madame de Mirepoix. "He is betraying you; but, remember, he who leaves the game loses it!"

The result of the Maréchale's remarks was that Madame de Pompadour determined to stay, but at the same time to give out that she was going, so that her enemies should have no handle against her. But, if all went well, she determined to make Machault pay for his falseness.

Quesnay, who under his quiet, unassuming manner could read men well, meanwhile remarked drily, that the Keeper of the Seals reminded him of a fox at a dinner party, who persuaded one of his companions that his enemies were on his track in order to obtain his share in his absence.

Although the King sent no messages to the Marquise, after this she kept up a fine show until January 15th, Damiens's attack on Louis having taken place on the 5th of the month, and the King still keeping his bed. On the 14th the Marquis d'Argenson entered in his diary, "The Marquise keeps a big table morning and evening in her *appartement* at Versailles." Two days later he records, "Yesterday the King paid a visit to the Marquise." Again, on Monday, January 17th, 1757—in the last entry which the good d'Argenson ever made—we find the following interesting record of current events:

"The Prince de Soubise with 24,000 men leaves in February for fifty-two days' march to the frontiers of Bohemia. Behold us, then, embarked for the conquest of Silesia! All the forces of Austria, with what she draws from Hungary, and 60,000 recruits, (bad troops,) will be there.

"The King of Prussia will not neglect to defend himself with good and well-disciplined troops. He has, in addition, some good German troops furnished to him

From a contemporary print.

MARC PIERRE DE VOYER DE PAULMY, COMTE D'ARGENSON.

by His Britannic Majesty, and possibly some Danish cavalry, which is excellent.

"Saturday evening the King went to see the Marquise, therefore there is no longer any uncertainty as to her fate. The favour of the Keeper of the Seals is trembling; they say he is sad and has changed.

"The Court of Vienna continues to make useless efforts to cause the Empire to declare against His Prussian Majesty. It is resisted, and in truth its arguments are but sophistries.

"A Prussian General has been sent to Hanover to regulate the operations in the approaching campaign."

These were the last words written by that most excellent observer and honest man René Louis de Voyer, Marquis d'Argenson. He was for six years Minister of Foreign Affairs during the War of the Austrian Succession, when he proved himself the one Minister of the reign of Louis XV. who was never self-seeking, and desired nothing but the welfare of his King and the good of his country. Court intrigues caused the removal from office of one who, with his Utopian ideas of preserving the general peace of the world, was considered too honest for his day. He, however, retained the rank of a Minister, as a member of the Council of State, until his death.

That event took place on January 26th, 1757, and but a few days later came the fall of a very different man, his younger brother, the Comte Marc Pierre d'Argenson. For, with the recovery of the King, Madame de Pompadour had her revenge: d'Argenson—the friend of the Royal Family, the friend of the Jesuits—was sacrificed. Choiseul, the zealous friend of Pompadour and of Austria, arrived conveniently from Vienna to back

up the Marquise. He gave himself the pleasure of going to the Comte to inform him of his downfall.

"Bah!" exclaimed d'Argenson, "the King loves me!" He thought himself secure for ever!

Shortly afterwards arrived a very peremptory letter from the King himself—it ran as follows: "Your services are no longer required. I command you to send me your resignation of the Secretaryship of State for War, and of all that appertains to the posts connected therewith, and to retire to your estate of Ormes."

This exile was pronounced on February 1st. Madame de Pompadour had taken advantage of the King's continued fear for his life to procure this harsh dismissal of her enemy. She told him that the Jesuits had undoubtedly been at the bottom of Damiens' crime, and that was sufficient to inspire Louis to strike this severe blow. It was aimed as much at the Dauphin and Jesuits as against a bold and unscrupulous man, who had practically been a Minister ever since the last year of the Regent and Cardinal Dubois, both of whom died in 1723. Comte d'Argenson lived until 1764, but, as Pompadour likewise lived and flourished until that year, he was never again taken into favour.

While sweeping d'Argenson from her path, Madame de Pompadour did not forget to be revenged also upon her old *protégé* M. de Machault, and he also was sent off where he could never interfere with her more.

Since the Keeper of the Seals had always been the enemy of Adélaïde and the clergy, the King was not sorry to sacrifice him, as he knew that his dismissal would be agreeable to the Royal Family, and make up in some measure for their grief at the disgrace of d'Argenson.

It had, indeed, been against Machault that, for the last eight years, the disgraceful manœuvres of the Royal Princesses had been employed on behalf of the clergy. Nevertheless, Louis did not couple the disgrace of Machault d'Arnouville with a crushing epistle such as had been sent to d'Argenson. He was, on the contrary, dismissed in an honourable manner, and granted a pension.

Madame de Pompadour now had a clear field to herself, and determined to make the most of her advantages. She entered into secret negotiations with the Parliamentarians, and gave them to understand that she was as much interested as themselves in the suppression of the Jesuits.

To them a heavy blow had been already struck by Damiens, since the two hundred boys removed by their parents from the College of Saint Louis le Grand never went back; the grass was growing in the courtyard of the seminary, and the Jesuits were without occupation. Further, since Kaunitz was against the Jesuits, Choiseul and the Abbé de Bernis, being both good Austrians, shared his opinions. Madame la Marquise was, therefore, well supported.

Meanwhile, what was the condition of affairs in Europe? A noble and imposing spectacle might there be seen, that of the earth shaking under the footsteps of 700,000 men; all the Kings of the Continent of Europe banded together against one alone—Frederick of Prussia. How is the quarry, with but one set of teeth of his own, to escape from the bloodthirsty fangs of this pack of ravening wolves? Must he not infallibly be rent limb from limb, be torn into four quivering quarters as surely as the miserable Damiens? So, at all events, it

would seem. Nor is the great man, the supporter of free thought, attacked with arms alone; the pen is also employed to vilify his name, hurl calumnies upon his devoted head. The spiteful, paid press of Austria and of Choiseul, the talented and bitter satire of the spiteful and revengeful Voltaire, the man whom Frederick has protected against his own countrymen, are now alike employed against the upholder of the liberties of Europe. All mercilessly seek to be-little his name!

In later days, again, Napoleon, jealous of the fame of Frederick, while pretending to hold him up to admiration, ungenerously neglects nothing that he may pull this great-hearted man down from his well-deserved pedestal. In judging his operations according to fixed and geometrical rules, he seems to be constantly saying, "*C'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la guerre!*" Napoleon deliberately ignores the conditions under which Frederick was compelled to fight—the scanty means at his disposal; would try, moreover, to have us believe that Austria, which had been preparing for this war for so long, was taken by surprise, that she was deficient of men and armaments. We cannot believe that the ignorance of the victor of Austerlitz and Jena can be other than voluntary, when he ignores the existence of the great military machine which had been long since consolidated by Prince Eugène, forgets, too, the warlike Hungarians and the Croatian regiments incorporated as a part of that great fighting machine. However that may be, we, nowadays, can at all events recognise how slight must have been the chances of Frederick, with his small dominions to recruit from, against all Europe.

What number had he to draw upon? Four million

men! And what Austria, Russia, France, Sweden, Poland, and Saxony combined? It cannot have been less than tens of millions of human beings that they had behind them, available, if necessary, for military service.

The wonderful point to be observed in connection with the sword which Frederick had forged for himself, wherewith to do and dare against all the world, is that it was no homogeneous weapon welded from one source alone, and that Prussian. The so-called Prussian army was composed of soldiers of all nations, fused by the marvellous skill of its manufacturer into an instrument which worked together with the regularity of a clock. There was, therefore, no high national aim or patriotic spirit to inspire this force with heroic valour; none of that love of the natal soil which, in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, made the modern German shout "Vaterland!" or sing the "Wacht am Rhein." Nor were the soldiers of Frederick moved by a spirit such as that of the armies of the revolutionary epoch in France, when, hating tyrants and tyranny at home, they poured like an avalanche over the mountain passes to crush all that represented to them tyrants and tyranny abroad.

Was it then, as in the old armies of the free lance, the brigand Waldstein, or Wallenstein, the incentive of unlimited pillage, unbounded rapine, held out to the conglomerate masses of Frederick's forces, which rendered them solid and unswerving in attack, and left them still solid and unswerving in retreat before overpowering numbers? No, it was not the incentive of pillage, for pillage was sternly repressed; it was not the hope of riot or rapine, for, in the highly disciplined armies of the great Prussian, such freaks—regarded as mere frivolities

by French Generals of the type of the Duc de Richelieu—were rewarded with the rope.

What inspired the armies of Frederick was nothing more nor less than the spirit of the Commander himself. His warlike and martial valour, his courage in success, coolness in difficulties, and, above all, his wonderful promptitude to act in the right manner at the right time, filled all under him with an unbounded confidence in his ability. That confidence replaced every other incentive which has ever led the soldier on to death or glory in an unknown land, among foreign races speaking an unknown tongue.

This is all the stranger since, in point of fact, Frederick was born to practise nought but the arts of peace. Stout and soft by constitution, nearly up to the age of thirty music, art, and literature were his delight and sole occupations. He shone as an author in prose, while in verse he possessed considerable merit; as a believer in free thought, he was a philosopher like Diderot, d'Alembert, or Voltaire. Like them again, the language which he thought and wrote in was French; for if by birth Frederick was a German, the brutal behaviour of his father had made him loathe German ideas, while his sympathy for the ideas of the French refugees by whom he was brought up, when a prisoner at Cästrin, in exile from home, had converted him into a Frenchman.

At less than thirty years of age, however, this apparent Frenchman, fat, unwieldy, and accused of gross and immoral habits, succeeded to a little but newly made German kingdom. He sprang upon the back of a war-horse, and, before the first six months of his reign were over, astonished the world by leading his arms against mighty Austria, and his first rapid conquest of her country

of Silesia. He had an object in life outside of the pursuit of the arts—the study of French literature. It was to make a big kingdom out of a little one; to let the world hear about himself. How well he succeeded we know! From the middle to the end of the eighteenth century his name was rarely out of the minds of men.

CHAPTER X

The Duc de Richelieu and Frederick

1757

WHAT would not have been the loss of all the thinkers of the eighteenth century if Frederick had fallen in one of his battles! He had made Berlin the asylum of free thought, that most precious of all liberties—religious liberty. Frederick felt himself to be both the guardian of the rights of conscience and the rights of the Empire, and thus necessary to the world at large. Except for the moment of alarm by which he allowed himself to be overcome in his first great battle, Mollwitz, no one ever braved death more firmly and courageously than the King of Prussia. His soldiers expected this of their Commander—looked about to see if he was with them in the moment of danger. One night, after a battle, by the fires of the bivouac, some of the men said, speaking with the liberty of the camp, "Where were you to-day, Sire? We did not see you!" Without replying, Frederick showed his clothes—they were riddled with bullet-holes. A bullet, embedded in some article of his accoutrements, likewise fell out before their eyes. The men were ashamed, and said, "Sire, we will die for you!"

The King never lost his good spirits in the face of his

worst misfortunes. He was never in worse case than after the battle of Kollin, which he had waged against Daun with double his numbers. Meeting one of his soldiers—a French grenadier—in the act of deserting, Frederick inquired affably, "For what reason are you leaving us?"

"Sire! luck seems dead against you," was the reply.

"That's true! Well, listen, my friend. Just wait for one more battle, and then, if things don't improve, we'll both desert together!"

The next battle happened to be the victory of Rosbach, but the grenadier was killed.

After the dismissal of the Comte d'Argenson the chief commands in the French army were given solely in accordance with the whim of Madame de Pompadour. Accordingly, while the Maréchal d'Estrées was sent to attack the Duke of Cumberland, the third son of George II., who was commanding the Hanoverian troops in Westphalia, and, that favourite of the Marquise, the Prince de Soubise was entrusted with an army wherewith to join the Austrians and face Frederick, the Duc de Richelieu for a time remained unemployed. Although he had become the hero of France from his victories in Minorca, the capturer of Port Mahon found himself condemned to kick his heels about the ante-chambers of Versailles, fulfilling his functions of First Gentleman to the King, simply because he was known to have had designs of replacing the Marquise with the King by another favourite of his own choice.

The Duc de Richelieu lost no time in trying to make amends to Pompadour for his past antagonism, and, by every means, to ingratiate himself into her favour. He was warmly seconded in his cabals by the Duchesse de

Lauraguais, one of the four sisters de Nesle who had been the mistresses of Louis XV. before the arrival upon the scene of the then Madame d'Étioles. The sister of Madame de Châteauroux still retained something of the King's consideration, and it was not long before the Marquise herself was inclined to second the efforts of Madame de Lauraguais, and help Richelieu's cause with Louis.

This was owing to the fact that d'Estrées had highly displeased the Marquise by hanging a *protégé* of hers whom he had discovered to be swindling in the matter of stores for his army. Already had there been complaints of the slowness of the Maréchal d'Estrées, and it was secretly decided at Versailles that he should be recalled, letters from the Comte de Maillebois, his second-in-command, doubtless giving an excuse for the decision.

It was, however, difficult to keep even the most important matters secret at a Court where the King was given over to women and intoxication, and the King's official mistress was surrounded by sycophants of all ranks and both sexes. Thus M. de Puysieux, father-in-law of the Maréchal, learned what was in the wind, and wrote to him as follows: "An ill turn has been done you; your conduct is blamed; you are accused of timidity; your successor is already named. Give battle! it is absolutely necessary. If you win it, you will be regretted; if you lose it, you will be no worse off than you are now."

This letter decided the battle of Hastenbeck, by which, on July 26th, 1757, d'Estrées forced the entrenchments of the Duke of Cumberland and defeated him. In this battle the Comte de Maillebois treacherously failed to

back up his commander, wishing him to be defeated in order that he might himself step into his shoes. This defection, added to an able movement on behalf of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, prevented the defeat of Cumberland with the Hanoverian troops from being turned into a rout. The Comte de Maillebois deserved to have lost his head for his disgraceful action, far more than the unhappy Admiral Byng merited to be shot for the retreat of his fleet before that of de la Galissonnière before Minorca. The only punishment, however, which he ever received was to be declared, long afterwards, by a court composed of Maréchaux de France, unworthy of ever attaining the rank of Maréchal. Such was the result of Court influences—they proved also too strong for d'Estrées. In spite of his victory he was relieved of his command, and Richelieu was sent to replace him.

The wisdom of M. de Puysieux was then seen, for all fell out as he had foretold. The fickle public which had accused d'Estrées of cowardice, now praised him as a great General, while loudly declaiming against the Ministry which had so unjustly recalled him. Thus, fortunately for himself, the Maréchal was enabled to retire gracefully, with the reputation of a hero, from a war which was ere long to prove but a succession of disasters for France.

In Germany, Richelieu soon profited from the result of d'Estrées's recent success; the Electorate of Hanover was occupied, all the towns opened their gates to him, while Hesse-Cassel, Brunswick, and the Duchies of Verden and Bremen were occupied with equal ease. This dissolute noble gave himself and his army up to the most shameful pillage. While permitting every kind of excess to his men, the Duc de Richelieu levied

enormous contributions for his own pocket from each of the captured towns. The Duke of Cumberland, who had retreated to the protection of British ships at the mouth of the Elbe, signed with Richelieu the Convention of Closter-Seven—by which his troops were disbanded—and sailed for England.

It has been alleged against Richelieu that he was too much interested in his marauding operations to take the trouble to secure by this convention the disarmament of the Hanoverians, Hessians, and Brunswickers, contenting himself with the stipulation that they should not serve again during the war. Against this charge it must be remembered that the real conduct of the war was at Versailles, in the hands of Madame de Pompadour. Before Richelieu received, after a long delay, a reply to his letter asking immediate instructions, the Duke of Cumberland had sailed for England, and his men had dispersed, taking their arms with them. This gave an opportunity, which was not neglected later on, after Rosbach, for Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick to reassemble this army under his command.

Thus the celebrated Convention of Closter-Seven, which, guaranteed as it was by the King of Denmark, had been such a feather in the cap of Richelieu when it was signed on September 8th, 1757, proved eventually not to be worth the paper that it was written on, although, as at first concluded, it had seemed to deprive Frederick for ever of his sole ally. Richelieu cared little, however; he had lined his pockets so well in Hanover that, upon his return to Paris, he was enabled to build the magnificent Pavilion of Hanover out of his German spoils. This return to Paris took place in the following year, after Richelieu had compelled Prince Ferdinand to retreat

before him in a winter campaign, without, however, being able to force that General to accept a pitched battle. The Duc de Richelieu was replaced by a Prince of the Blood Royal, the Comte de Clermont, Abbot-Commendatory of Saint-Germain des Près. Before his retirement, however, so great had been the atrocities committed by the men under his command, that Frederick caused the following letter to be written to the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu, the writer being Prince Henry, brother of the Prussian King.

"MONSIEUR,

"After the horrible disorders, vexations, and depredations which the French troops have committed during their last incursion into the Principality of Halberstadt, I have the King's order to warn you that the same inhumanity and barbarity will be practised in the territories of the allies of the King of France, and that henceforward the same unworthy and miserable treatment will be meted out to captive French officers as your troops have inflicted upon His Majesty's subjects.

"It is in His Majesty's own words that I inform you of his intentions. I am, with the most perfect esteem and the greatest consideration,

"Your affectionate friend,

"HENRY OF PRUSSIA."

The affectionate ending of this letter is remarkable, but it must be borne in mind that not very long before it was written, Frederick himself had been carrying on a secret and friendly correspondence with Richelieu on the subject of the Maréchal becoming the mediator for peace. This was a step proposed by Voltaire, in a letter written to Frederick's sister on August 21st, 1757.

Voltaire, who had latterly been the object of the caresses of Pompadour, Kaunitz, and Choiseul, had, as we have seen, been keeping up his old ill-humour against his former friend and protector, Frederick. He, however, seems to have been moved by the misfortunes of the Prussian King—then at their greatest height—when he wrote this letter, which was before the battle of Rosbach. Frederick's correspondence, however, with Richelieu, conducted as it was in a most flattering strain, was but a blind to gain time. Inwardly he smiled at the innocence of Voltaire, when he proposed blandly that he should "leave all to the goodness of the King of France." Since Richelieu was then Commander-in-Chief, Frederick very cunningly put him to sleep when he wrote that "the great nephew of the great Cardinal was made to sign treaties as well as to gain battles; the conqueror of Minorca, and the probably future subjugator of Lower Saxony, could do nothing more glorious than procure the peace of Europe."

But let us see how the world has been faring with the King of Prussia while the events which we have described have been taking place.

We left His Prussian Majesty last playing on the flute in Dresden, after pulling the Electress Queen off the lid of the strong-box upon which she had seated herself, and giving its contents to all the world.

From Dresden Frederick marched off into Bohemia. He had already taken Prague in the year 1744, and now, thirteen years later, he once more appeared before the walls of that city. On May 5th, 1757, he waged another bloody battle upon the old ground, and defeated one of the Austrian armies, with fearful carnage on both sides. No less than 28,000 men remained upon the field,

and of these Frederick lost 12,000. Fifty thousand Austrians retreated into Prague. "Against the rules of war," according to Napoleon, Frederick now with 30,000 men besieged the city containing this enormous garrison. No sooner was he engaged in this operation than he learned that Daun, with another Austrian army of 60,000, was close at hand—merely ten leagues from Prague. The King also knew that an enormous Russian army was advancing on Prussia, and that a French army was likewise marching to meet a Swedish army, with the intention of together falling upon Berlin.

Under these circumstances the great man gave up his siege and marched off as fast as he could with his 30,000 to attack Daun, especially as he learned that this General was receiving large reinforcements daily of Hungarians and Croatians. Daun naturally resisted the attack at Kollin, and that so vigorously that Frederick was defeated, losing a great number. Twenty thousand men were the combined losses on both sides in this affair. Frederick, far from having been wrong to have attacked Daun, was right. Although defeated, he crippled the Austrian Commander so badly that for seven months he was incapable of moving. It is awful to think of the miseries accompanying these fearful conflicts, especially when it is remembered that in those days there were no hospital arrangements accompanying the armies. What then must have been the condition of the wretched wounded on both sides after each of these bloody encounters ?

The King of Prussia's troubles increased after Kollin. He learned of his mother's death ; learned also that his brother, heir to his crown, wished to make peace rather than fight any longer. He was obliged to send his

brother away. The news also came to hand that Sweden had seized Pomerania, and that the Russian masses, with their accompanying Tartar swarms of Zaporogian Cossacks, were entering Prussia from the east, and eating up the whole of his country. The French, meanwhile, on the west were likewise cheaply victorious, there being none to oppose them. Cumberland, having already suffered defeat at Hastenbeck by d'Estrées, was retiring with his 37,000 men, almost at a run, to the sea coast, before the advance of Richelieu. Then next Frederick learns of the signing of the Convention of Closter-Seven —hears that his only ally is gone ! He still makes a bold defence of Silesia ; but the Austrian cavalry care so little for him that they insolently march off to Berlin, and put the city to a ransom.

Marie Theresa can hardly contain herself for pride. Fat and puffed out as she is, she swells to double her size as she learns how her long daily prayers are being answered. Already she sees the moment when her mortal hatred, her rancorous jealousy, will be satisfied with that which alone she desires—the spilled-out blood, or, at all events, the most utter humiliation of the one great man of the day. Nor is she alone in her triumph. The other women of the league of death are likewise swelling with pride and hate to keep the Empress company. Pompadour, the Electress-Queen, and Elizabeth of Russia have indeed cause for the wildest transports of self-gratulation, as they learn of the miserable plight that their enemy is in, and count the days to the shortly expected time when his place will be no more upon the continent of Europe.

Horrible indeed are already the results of the war prepared so skilfully by the women ; endless the untold

miseries of both soldiery and a ravished peasantry wherever lie the fields of operations. The furies of rage of the feminine league will, however, soon doubtless subside, merely because there will be no Frederick left against whom to let those furies loose.

At least, so think the league of women, in their respective Palaces—before the sick man, with his small army of the north, 20,000 against 60,000, gives the Russians a dressing down at Jaegernoff; before Rosbach, where he takes 7,000 prisoners from France; before Leuthen, where 21,000 Austrians and 50 standards become his prey; and before Zorndorf, where, giving no quarter, early in 1758, Frederick kills 19,000 Russians in the bloodiest battle of the war! It seems scarcely necessary to mention, in addition, a little affair in which, before these great battles, Frederick made a laughing-stock of the Prince de Soubise by driving off 8,000 of the French grenadiers with merely 1,500 men, and taking the camp and baggage of this favourite of Versailles.

CHAPTER XI

Rosbach

1757

BETWEEN that brave and skilful old counsellor the Maréchal de Belle-Isle and the sturdy Pâris-Duverney, the farmer-general, still at eighty the active furnisher of horses and warlike stores to the armies, Pompadour did not want for advice. In her arrogance, however, the King's mistress declined to lend an ear to any counsels that did not owe their origin to Vienna. The suggestjons of Vienna were, in 1757, to use Richelieu only in a secondary capacity, to strike the important blows by the agency of the 25,000 men commanded by the Prince de Soubise, united to the Germanic army of 35,000 under the leadership of the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen.

When we consult the annals of the family of Soubise for the preceding seventy or eighty years we do not find anything very great. In looking backwards, the first name we find of any note is Madame de Soubise, the dazzling blonde who, under the allegory of Cupid and Psyche, caused the story of her amours with Louis XIV. to be painted on the ceilings of the Hôtel Soubise. This lady is said to have been ardently attached to her complaisant husband, and was only an occasional caprice

of the Grand Monarque, whom she visited in his Palace at such times as he sent for her in order that she might gain money to give to her husband.

The most notorious son of this lady, first known as the Cardinal de Rohan—afterwards as Soubise—was a kind of man-woman. He was supposed to be the son of the "Roi-Soleil," and inherited his mother's wonderful colouring and complexion, in order to preserve which he took daily baths of milk. He became Louis-Dieudonné's Grand Almoner, and was a zealous member of the Molinist sect, closely allied to Jesuitry. Two other Soubises were, like him, Cardinals and Grand Almoners. One of these, according to d'Argenson, chiefly remarkable for his extraordinary devotion to his sister, died young, worn out by his vices. His brother the Prince de Soubise, the General of Louis XV., was agreeable to the King chiefly on account of the similarity of their moral code. He likewise had a good foothold in the Court through his sister Madame de Marsan. She enjoyed the post of "Gouvernante des enfants de France," and owed it to the good graces of Maria Theresa. Madame de Marsan caused her brother also to become the adopted favourite of Austria and Madame de Pompadour, with the result that the ancient great and honourable post of Constable of the Kingdom was proposed for revival in his person.

Soubise had therefore every incentive to become a hero had he had it in him. The troops, however, with which he was supplied were of the worst quality. While everything in France had fallen into decadence, the decadence of the army indeed surpassed all else. The influence of Louis XV. was not such as to create or maintain good Generals or good troops, and from the

first wars of his reign there had been a gradual falling off, especially in the quality of the infantry, which had done such splendid deeds under the Duc d'Orléans before the King's accession.

Nor did this falling off in the quality of the foot-soldier come all at once. Never were more noble deeds performed than those of the few under the gallant Plélo outside the walls of Dantzic, where King Stanislas Lesczynski was in 1731 beseiged by 30,000 Russians. With merely 1,500 men the Comte de Plélo charged this whole enormous Muscovite force, and would have cut his way completely through had he not fallen mortally wounded. As it was, the remainder of his little band entrenched themselves, and for three weeks kept the Russian army at bay. In that same war some of the most heroic conflicts in the north of Italy were won by the steadiness of the French infantry. Such, for instance, was the case at Guastalla and at Parma, shortly after the eighty-year-old Maréchal Duc de Villars died. This General had inspired the young French soldiers with his own devotion. He was not, unfortunately, the witness of their heroism, by which the crown of Naples was secured to Don Carlos of Spain.

Already had this warlike spirit weakened by the time of the battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy. Now, twenty-two years after Fontenoy, no one in France retained any real martial spirit. Quesnay, the King's doctor, said in an article on the subject of Farmers, which he contributed to the *Encyclopédie*, "Our peasants have a horror of war."

A notable reason for this was the fact that the cause of Austria, if the cause of the Court, was by no means that of the people of France. The same soldiers who

From an engraving after the picture by H. Rigaud.

CARDINAL DE ROHAN.

had gaily embarked as volunteers to fight in sunny Minorca against their old enemies the English, detested being dragged through the mud and morasses of Germany " for the sake of those pigs of Kaiserlics ! "

The habits and fashions of the day had rendered the officers effeminate to a degree. A whole army of barbers accompanied the force of the Prince de Soubise, which was also followed by an enormous army of women. Actresses, dancers, and singers—the paramours of the officers—had with them their own train of coiffeurs and cooks ; while of the *marchandes de modes*, milliners, shop-girls, essence sellers, and grisettes, who supplied them all with necessaries as in Paris, the non-commissioned officers and soldiers made their *bonnes amies*. Thus, instead of resembling the camp of a disciplined army, the halting-place of the Prince de Soubise was nightly like some huge fair, the rallying-point of mad merriment and unbridled debauchery.

With no less than 12,000 chariot loads of women dragging along with the rear guard of the army, there was indeed no cause for any one of the 25,000 of Soubise to have cause to complain of loneliness—the camp was a perpetual bazaar, where each soldier, like each officer, sauntered about with his girl upon his arm.

The French army presented a grand spectacle at ten o'clock each morning. In front of the tents—in line—all of the officers had their hair arranged. The hair-dressers, wearing the sword, held them there under the curling-tongs, frizzed and powdered them. This was a most essential ceremony, for no officer could exhibit himself unfrizzed. Unless his head was properly arranged, he was no longer a man. Every duty, every danger,

had to give way therefore to this important operation, which took a full hour.

There was a great difference between the method of wearing the wig in the days of Louis XIV. and in those which followed. Then, the great flowing perukes were frizzed overnight ready to be worn next day, while in the eighteenth century the *artiste* in hair arranged the periwig and the wearer's head together. At the time of the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789 there were between 20,000 and 30,000 *perruquiers* in Paris.

That nothing might be wanting to add to the effeminacy of the officers of Louis XV., their chief amusements were needlework, embroidery, and the cutting-out of engravings from books. These were the habits of the Court. Louis, in his boyhood, as we have seen, learned to work at tapestry. Thus the officers merely imitated the Court. Many of them were very young; some Colonels were only fifteen years of age. One Colonel merely twelve years old was present in the assault upon General Blakeney's forts at Port Mahon. Being too small to scramble over the broken masonry work in the breach, a grenadier picked up his commanding officer and carried him into the work which was being stormed.

While such universal giddiness reigned in the armies of France, there was great corruption in the Austrian ranks, and none set a worse example in this respect than the lazy Emperor, Francis of Lorraine. While his wife's armies were being thrashed by the Prussians, the Emperor was turning an honest penny by supplying Frederick with flour for his men and hay for his horses. Since in Paris Louis XV. had "a corner in grain," it

is evident that the commercial instinct was strong among the crowned heads of Europe at that period!

The manners and customs of the great Austrian ladies were abominable. They gave themselves up to all sorts of excesses with their favourites of their own sex. These women—ladies-of-honour, or confidential *femmes de chambre* as a rule—had their lovers, to whom they told all their mistresses' secrets. Many of these men were the spies of the King of Prussia, who knew everything that went on in Vienna, just as, by his spies in France, he knew all the secrets of Versailles. An example of this was to be seen when the Duc de Richelieu was, in secret, selected to replace the Maréchal d'Estrées. Frederick the Great knew that this change had been decided upon before even the Maréchal de Belle-Isle had any idea that it was contemplated.

From his sure sources of information in Vienna, Frederick was early apprised of the fact that the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen was pulling violently at Soubise, dragging him on to a battle, whether he felt ready for one or not. The Prussian King was likewise aware of the designs of Maria Theresa to leave France in the lurch when she should have gained her own ends. Since the army of Saxe-Hildburghausen was so much greater than that of Soubise, the glory would of course be entirely German. Maria Theresa could therefore repudiate her promise of the Austrian Low Countries for the Infanta, Duchess of Parma. Frederick II. had already entered Saxony and pushed the allies back into Thuringia, causing them to suffer various reverses without suffering at all himself, and the boldness of his movements disquieted Soubise and the officers under him. With reference to this, an officer with the army wrote to the

Comte de Clermont, "This Prince, with at most 18,000 or 20,000 men, marches upon an army of 50,000, forces it to re-cross a river, cuts off its rear-guard, crosses this same river before its very eyes, offers battle, retires, encamps leisurely, and never loses a man. What calculation, what audacity in this fashion of covering a country!"

On November 5th, 1757, Frederick was comfortably installed with his 20,000 men upon the heights of Rosbach, in Prussia, on the left bank of the Saale. He had full view of the allied army, and knew, therefore, that Soubise had just received a large reinforcement sent by the Duc de Richelieu. The tents of the Prussian Monarch, standing in their regular lines upon the heights, hid from the allies any possible distribution of his troops in line of battle behind them. In fact, all looked the same as usual in his camp; nevertheless Soubise was suspicious and fearful to attack the heights. At that very moment, according to the chronicles of Duclos, a letter from the Duc de Choiseul, written in Vienna, was handed to the Prince de Soubise. It strongly urged him to attack at once. This letter amounted almost to an imperious order from the Empress Maria Theresa herself. Soubise was a poor man, he hoped to make his fortune by success; but should he not even venture to strike a bold blow for that success he well knew there was nothing ahead of him but ruin.

> He either fears his fate too much, or his deserts are small,
> Who fails to put it to the touch, to win or lose it all!

At least, so thought Soubise; when Saxe-Hildburghausen, coming up, said foolishly, "I hold him. I am going to surround him."

The plan of the German sounded absurdly easy as he detailed it to the Prince de Soubise. It consisted in pushing the whole of the great allied army to the right, and marching round behind the left wing of the Prussian camp, getting behind Frederick so as to cut his line of retreat.

This operation was commenced, and allowed calmly to continue for some time, without any interference from the Prussian King, whose tents stood so innocently on the heights of Rosbach. At length the whole of the allied army is marching in columns of route, exposing its long flank as it passes the point where the left flank of the Prussian army should be, that is supposing the army drawn up in line behind the tents. But is it there still? May not the front have been changed? One bugle sound—one note alone!

Down, as by magic, falls every tent to the ground, unmasking every gun the Prussian possesses, all ready in position. They pour a plunging fire into the masses of infantry below, and at the same time the Prussian cavalry is hurled down the slope. The French cavalry makes some gallant counter-charges; but the infantry, both of the Germans and the French, are already broken. In fact, they cannot even be got into proper fighting formation.

Three salvoes of cannon, hurling round shot through their confused masses, tearing through the thickly packed bodies, complete the disorder. Soubise endeavours to bring up his reserve infantry. It is useless. They are overthrown violently, and soon run also, or yield themselves prisoners *en masse*. All those who ran, and they were a very great many, ran a long way—to Erfurt. Only 3,000 were killed, owing to the

expedition shown by at least 40,000 of the allies in getting away. Eight thousand prisoners, however, the French own to having lost, not counting those of the army of Saxe-Hildburghausen. A French historian of the last century says of Rosbach :

" The affair was only rldiculous. Few wounded, very few dead, but numberless prisoners. The *suite* would have been terrible if the night, falling early, had not charitably covered the camps of the women, that great flock of feeble creatures, of ladies who were fainting, of crazy girls shrieking. The merchants left their all, not having time to pack. The cooks left behind all their cooking utensils. Far ahead, veritable zephyrs, flew the *perruquiers*, flinging away the sword, which got between their legs. This whirlwind would have flown far had not a wretched little torrent, called the Instrutt, stopped everything short. Only one bridge !— a long defile ! Two days—three days—they fly in different directions, and starving. No food has been carried along. If by good luck anything is found, scarcely does one commence to dine when a cry is heard, ' Here are the enemy ! ' "

This picture, if comic, is none the less pitiable. We can imagine the poor flying women, separated from their friends, and starving, day after day, in the cold winter season ; hustled, too, by the rough soldiers, who no longer have a kind word for them, as they push them violently on one side in their effort to make good their own escape. What did they do, these miserable creatures, accustomed to luxury for which they had not to toil, when compelled to tramp along through mud, slush, snow, and bitter driving rain ? How did they sleep at night in the ploughed fields, on the roadside,

in pools of water, without even a blanket to cover their bedraggled forms, and with no fastening for their hair, all fallen and tangled, dripping limply, and contributing to their miserable plight? To add to their horrors, they were in a foreign land. What became of them in the end? Surely a great number must have died in abject misery. But did none of the poor wretches who survived ever write an account of the horrors of the flight of the women from Rosbach? Such an account, truly written, would be worth a hundred histories of any campaign.

The abandoned camp was a surprising sight for the disciplined soldiers of the Prussian King. These hard-living warriors, far from being sybarites like the French, had no knowledge of the meaning of all the Parisian frivolities with which they found the camp bestrewn. They had no use for such a booty as lay before them. What could the rude Prussian, Silesian, or Saxon soldier do with the myriad scent-bottles and curling-tongs? What use could he make of the most *récherché* articles of female attire, lying everywhere, scattered pell-mell? What could he do even with the needlework that he found in the abandoned tents of the French officers? The scene of the deserted camp must indeed have been extraordinary, and have brought many a smile to the cynical features of Frederick as he rode slowly through the débris with his staff.

Not being, however, like Maria Theresa, revengeful, being also unlike Richelieu, the Prussian King gave the strictest orders for the kind treatment of all prisoners, especially the wounded. All the unwounded officers he asked to his own table. Making humble excuses for not being able to entertain them better, Frederick said

"But you see, Messieurs, I did not expect you so soon—nor in such numbers!" And he added, "I cannot accustom myself to look upon Frenchmen as enemies." The French officers were soon everywhere enthusiastic in his praise.

CHAPTER XII

Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu, d'Alembert, and Jean Jacques Rousseau

BEFORE the battle of Rosbach the fortunes of Frederick II. had seemed to be at their lowest ebb, especially as the Austrians, with 100,000 men, had retaken Silesia. Prince Charles of Lorraine was therefore in possession of that country at the time of Rosbach, in spite of which defeat Maria Theresa was almost delirious with pride and joy. She and her partisans were mocking Frederick in their triumph, while feeling that Silesia must now be for ever secure, when they found, to their surprise, that they had been counting without the King of Prussia. Marching straight off from the battle-field of Rosbach into Silesia, exactly a month after that battle, Frederick found Charles of Lorraine at Leuthen, or Lissa. He instantly attacked the Prince, and the Austrians paid for their mockeries with their blood. It was the seventh battle which Frederick had fought that year, and was the *chef d'œuvre* of the Prussian's military career. It took place in mid-winter, on December 5th, 1757, and by it he reconquered Silesia. Even Napoleon speaks with admiration of this wonderful feat of arms by which 6,000 Austrians lost their lives, while 21,000 became prisoners of war. The luck now had

turned with a vengeance! Pitt was in power in England, and Frederick received at the same time money and an army. The Convention of Closter-Seven was torn up, and the Hanoverian army put under the command of Frederick's Generals. With the enormous subsidy given to him by England, the King of Prussia was furthermore enabled to enlist thousands of deserters who, arriving from all sides, were anxious to take service under the banner of such a wonderful warrior.

In France, meantime, the unhappy Soubise had been made the subject of ribald ballads, and popular feeling was all on the side of their old ally Frederick. Even the Austrians now regretted having gone to war with him, saying, that after all a Prussian was a German like themselves. Thus the world at large recognised his greatness; but in his own simple recitals of this unrighteous war Frederick does nothing to point out the moral of the greatness of his actions. On the contrary, that the future may not be deceived, he points out his faults, and makes no excuses for his defeats. Nor does he anywhere exaggerate the losses of his enemies; his inclination always seems to put them down at the lowest possible figure.

Apart from his successes as a General, when we consider Frederick as a King, the wonderful manner in which he improved the lot of all, especially the poorest classes in his own country, when again we regard him as a *littérateur*, and look over the colossal edition of his works in prose and verse, we must consider him as the greatest man of his time. Even in the face of Voltaire his reputation as a man of letters does not shrink, and Diderot, d'Alembert and others, the greatest thinkers of their time, although members of a hostile nation,

willingly recognised his great talents as a philosopher like themselves.

Voltaire, who had parted from Frederick at Berlin in 1753, had left in the hands of the King of Prussia an incomplete copy of his immense work *L'Essai sur l'histoire générale et les mœurs*. Frederick allowed this to be printed, and, unfinished as it was, the book was reprinted everywhere. It was not, however, until the year of Rosbach that Voltaire, like his former protector, had his great victory. The Dauphin, smarting under the blow which had struck him, through his wife, quite as much as the Marquise de Pompadour—since it had been to avenge the insult to his wife's mother that he had become the partisan of the Austrian cause—thought now of avenging God by causing the suppression of the *Encyclopédie*, already once suspended some years earlier. The King accordingly in 1757 caused the withdrawal from circulation of the two volumes of the great work which had already been issued. Voltaire replied to this challenge to the philosophers by at once publishing, in complete form, his book which the world had been impatiently waiting for for four years—a partisan work of anti-religious tendency. When the *Essai sur les mœurs* appeared in all its grandeur, it had immediately the most wonderful success, the large number of seven thousand copies appearing at its first issue. The whole of Europe was soon inundated with the book, and thus did Voltaire also win his Rosbach, and defeat the blow aimed by the Dauphin, with religious bigotry, at himself and all the great thinkers of the day.

Diderot, meanwhile, was not disheartened. All undismayed, he continued to animate the most eminent liberal thinkers in France to range themselves under his

banner, and personally passed days and nights in workshops, examining machines and learning about their methods of operation from the workmen. For, in spite of endless troubles and difficulties, the indomitable Diderot—the son of a cutler, born in 1713—was determined to carry through to the bitter end the series of daring writings which undoubtedly led up to the Revolution of 1789. When the Parliament, the Sorbonne, and the Abbé le Chapelain all together fulminated against the great work, and caused another suppression in 1759, d'Alembert became frightened, and definitely abandoned his partner. Then even the bold Voltaire advised Diderot to fly and seek protection under Catharine of Russia. He remained, however, to interest Choiseul, Malesherbes, and the Marquise de Pompadour in the work. The result was that ten volumes were produced in triumph, to remain as a monument to Diderot, and a stimulus to thought which would lead to the sweeping away of all the old rotten condition of things, both in the Court and in the Church.

Although not one of the compilers of the *Encyclopédie*, there was another great man who from the time of the Regency had with a pen of daring sarcasm laid his finger upon all those glaring evils which it was the hope of the *Encyclopédistes* to rectify. This was Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, whose witty satire, called the *Lettres persanes*, had in the tolerant days of the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, taken the world by storm. He had not hesitated to say that Christianity, or rather Catholicism, as then constituted, without any real religion, "could not last another five hundred years." With immense courage, this philosophical magistrate of

the Parliament of Bordeaux went straight to the point when asking the question, "If Catholicism dies, is it the effect of its abuses which now separate it from the true principle of the Gospel, or is it the natural effect of the principle of Christianity itself?" Montesquieu, like Voltaire, the apostle of humanity and determined enemy of Jesuitical bigotry, died in the year 1755.

Notwithstanding his retirement from his position as editor of the *Encyclopédie*, in face of the determined opposition of the King and the Court, in 1759, the services of d'Alembert had already been immense towards its compilation, when fear compelled him to withdraw his hand from the plough. Having been early connected with the freethinkers of the age in the preparation, the "*Discours préliminaire*" of d'Alembert was characterised by that accomplished student the Marquis de Condorçet as one of which scarcely two men in a century could have been capable. A great mathematician, the author of a treatise on dynamics and of a prize essay at the Berlin Academy on the causes of the winds, there seemed to be no field of literature in which Jean le Rond d'Alembert was not equally at home. Thus was the power of his pen of immense value in the formation of a work in which the tendencies were so subversive of established opinions, so destructive of existing institutions. Like François Arouet (or, as he named himself, Voltaire) and Diderot, d'Alembert was in constant friendly communication with Frederick the Great and also the Empress Catharine II. of Russia, but he refused invitations to reside at the Courts of either of these Monarchs, even although accompanied by offers of a princely income.

Although but the illegitimate son, by the poet

Destouches, of the infamous Madame de Tencin, who abandoned him in the streets as an infant, d'Alembert was throughout his career of a singularly independent mind, and quite free from discourtesy or indifference to the feelings of others. For so long as she lived, which was forty years, he never neglected the wife of the poor glazier who had rescued him from the market-place called Le Rond, where she found him naked. He also shared in the accusations of impiety and intolerance showered upon the other contributors to the *Encyclopédie*, but this great thinker had always a staunch defender in the Bishop of Limoges.

While it is true that he loved her for years, the story is entirely false which tells us that d'Alembert died from grief because Mlle. de Lespinasse, the ill-treated reader of the blind Marquise de Deffand, did not return his love. He lived with her in one story of her house in the Rue Saint-Dominique for years from 1765, and when she died, in May, 1776, declared that he "only came after ten or twelve others in her affections." After the death of d'Alembert, the Bishop of Limoges made a distinction between this man, who took his name of le Rond from the place where he was found, and his colleagues, saying that, from what he had heard of him, his manners were simple and his conduct without a stain, while his works contained nothing but talent, information, and a sound system of morals. These remarks of the worthy Bishop could scarcely have been applied to either the life or writings of Voltaire, the son of the lawyer Arouet, or Diderot, the cutler's offspring. Nor would they have applied to another of the contributors to the *Encyclopédie*, another of the forces which led to the Revolution, that

eccentric, contradictory genius and misanthropist, Jean Jacques Rousseau.

This erratic son of a Geneva watchmaker, who first saw the light in 1712, eighteen years after the birth of Voltaire, although the author of an essay in the great book called the *Discours sur l'économie politique*, can scarcely be said to have, by its production, helped either the *Encyclopédie* or the people of France. This discourse was but a strange medley of conservative principles and revolutionary sentiments, and before its publication Jean Jacques, while declaring himself the "censor of civilisation," had already, in a strain of impassioned eloquence, assailed civilisation. This he did in an essay which had been accorded the prize by the retrograde Academy of Dijon.

From early youth the character of this philosopher is a constant contradiction. Becoming the lover of his patroness Madame de Warens, he renounces his Calvinist faith to live with that lady in her house at Chambéry. He leaves her and returns to her several times, eventually to find that, tired of his waywardness, she has taken a new lover. He becomes a musician, and not only invents a new method of musical notation, but establishes himself as the firm friend of Baron Friedrich Grimm, the celebrated French literary and musical critic, who was of German origin. This man, who was noted for his romantic and sentimental amours and his correspondence with seven crowned heads, Rousseau introduces in 1749 into the society of Diderot and the encyclopædists, and becomes his dearest friend.

When Grimm annoys all France by praising up extravagantly, in two witty pamphlets, the music of Italy, we find Rousseau openly siding with him, and,

by his *Lettre sur la musique française*, scandalising the musical world and wounding the national vanity to excess. For the sake of Grimm he is almost exiled from France, and yet a few years later he and Grimm are enemies!

In 1745, when Voltaire, now anxious at any price to gain a position in that Court which he has flouted, consents to write a ridiculous ballet, or opera, called *La reine de Navarre*, to welcome the Infanta, it is his friend Rousseau who revises it for him. And yet a year or two later, to avoid Voltaire, Rousseau abandons that Geneva of which, while having again embraced Calvinism, he has loudly proclaimed himself the "citizen"!

But what religion had he? What fidelity? At one time he is taken in hand by the Duc and Duchesse de Luxembourg, by the Prince de Conti, by the Comtesse de Boufflers, and M. de Malesherbes, all Catholics, and the latter the censor of the press. And yet he produces a book—*Émile ou de l'éducation*—which the Parliament considers so impious and blasphemous, so devoid of religion and morality, that these benefactors of Rousseau suffer with him in the odium created by its appearance. It is true that these friends have assisted him in the publication, but a man of his genius must have known what it would entail. The book is burned publicly, while Rousseau has to fly—although not before *Émile* has been read everywhere and had its effect.

In the matter of his amours, how does this man, by turns a Calvinist, a Romanist, a moralist, and the companion of freethinkers, compare with those around him? It is to be feared but lamentably; from Phœbus he flees to Pan. After the years of companionship, passed

From an engraving after the picture by Allan Ramsay.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

in her abodes at Chambéry or Les Charmettes, with a lady like Madame de Warens, he takes as his mistress Thérèse Levasseur, a commonplace and uninteresting servant-girl, whom he finds as a waitress in a low drinking-shop. After awhile, however, he becomes almost crazy with passion for Madame d'Houdetot, the mistress of his friend and benefactor Saint-Lambert, and the sister-in-law of his friend and benefactress Madame d'Épinay. Moreover, he publishes to the world the whole history of this amour, in a highly sentimental novel called *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, which publication has the result of creating in France a reign of extravagant sentiment, universal tearfulness. While himself giving readings of this book which greatly annoy Madame d'Épinay, Jean Jacques, at the same time, quarrels with his friend Diderot, whom he accuses of treachery. When subsequently Rousseau, in a similar manner, gave readings in society of the autobiography which he wrote under title of his *Confessions*, he still further annoyed his friend Madame d'Épinay. Owing to the sensation caused by the *Confessions*, which were intended as a vindication of his career, Madame d'Épinay was compelled to procure an order from the police to stop the readings.

It is almost impossible to follow in detail all the extraordinary actions of this almost impossible philosopher. When David Hume was kind to him, and gave to him who had no home, and was soon to be saddled with Thérèse Levasseur as wife, a home in England, he would not stay there. Hume had placed him in the house of a Mr. Davenport in Staffordshire; but this safe asylum from his enemies Rousseau left in a furious rage, declaring that Hume was conspiring against not only

his honour, but his life. Nevertheless he always found some one to befriend him to the end. Owing to the undoubted genius of which the rays flashed forth with renewed brilliancy from time to time, to the very last Jean Jacques found protectors. The last six weeks of his life were passed in the charming country residence of M. de Girardin at Ermenonville, near Chantilly, and here he died so suddenly on July 3rd, 1778, that rumours of suicide were willingly believed. The remains of this singularly unhappy man, after having been deposited for a time in an island on M. de Girardin's estate, were, during the Revolution, transported to the Pantheon in Paris, while the Constituent Assembly erected a statue to his honour.

A curious fact in reference to Jean Jacques Rousseau and his *collaborateur* on the *Encyclopédie*, François Marie Arouet or Voltaire, was the strange link—a link of shame—which was formed between them by the Marquis Charles François de Saint-Lambert mentioned above. While it was the Marquis' mistress, Madame d'Houdetot, in whose affections Rousseau so passionately sought to replace him, this unprincipled noble had already succeeded in playing the same mean trick upon Voltaire. Him, while at the Court in Lunéville in Lorraine of King Stanislas, Saint-Lambert supplanted with the literary Madame du Châtelet. This lady was already forty-two when she allowed herself to be charmed by the indifferent madrigals of the courtier and rhymester, who owed his introductions to the literary and fashionable circles of Paris to the man whom they both deceived. Perhaps we ought to say that the lady deceived two men, since she had also a husband, the Marquis du Châtelet, although for years he had willingly

occupied merely the position of tame cat in the household at Cirey with Voltaire. In 1719 this lady surprised both the husband and the lover by suddenly becoming a mother. Voltaire took the line of writing about the occurrence in a very flippant style to both the Comte d'Argental and his friend the Abbé de Voisenon. To the latter he wrote :

"My dear Abbé Greluchon,

"You must know that to-night Madame du Châtelet, being at her desk according to her laudable custom, exclaimed, 'Why, I feel something!' This something was a little girl, who came into the world forthwith, and was placed on a volume of geometry which happened to be near, and the mother went to bed."

This letter was dated Lunéville, September 4th, 1719, and six days later Madame du Châtelet died, when the deceived lover and husband both wept bitterly. Through his tears, Voltaire sobbed out to the husband, "Monsieur le Marquis, this is a thing which neither of us should boast over." They had just discovered that the portrait of Saint-Lambert occupied the place in a ring belonging to the dead lady which had formerly been occupied by a miniature of Voltaire.

In our remarks about Voltaire we have several times referred to his dissensions with Frederick the Great, his relations with whom commenced by the Prussian King conferring upon the French poet a pension, and the post of chamberlain at the Court of Berlin. Here his duties were light and agreeable. "I enjoy my leisure. I give an hour a day to the King of Prussia, to touch up a bit his works in prose and verse. I am

his grammarian, not his chamberlain. . . . Never in any place in the world was there more freedom of speech touching the superstitions of men, and never were they treated with more banter and contempt. God is respected, but all they who have cajoled men in His name are treated unsparingly." So writes Voltaire from Potsdam. Later he nearly quarrels with the King of Prussia over a history which Frederick is writing of his country—is angry with the Monarch for finding fault with his grandfather, Frederick I., son of the "Great Elector" of Brandenburg. "I had great trouble about softening down the terms in which the grandson reproaches his ancestor for his vanity in having got himself made a King; it is a vanity from which his descendants derive pretty solid advantages. At last I said to him, 'It is your grandfather, not mine! Do as you please'; and I confined myself to weeding the expressions."

Before Voltaire's arrival, the French savant and mathematician Pierre de Maupertuis was already established as President of the Academy at Berlin. From touchy vanity and petty envy Voltaire fell foul of this opposer of the physical theory of Descartes, although, like Voltaire himself, Maupertuis was a fervent disciple of Newton. A warm controversy ensued, and Frederick was not at all pleased when in a witty and bitter satire Voltaire demolished Maupertuis. This *Diatribe du docteur Akakia médecin du Pape* greatly irritated the King with Voltaire, but he was also annoyed owing to a discreditable lawsuit in which the French philosopher engaged with a Jew. Both Voltaire and Frederick wrote to the King's sister, the amiable Margravine of Bayreuth, concerning this affair. While the former defended his action, Frederick said to his sister,

"You ask me what the lawsuit is in which Voltaire is involved with a Jew. It is the case of a rogue wanting to cheat a thief. It is intolerable that a man of Voltaire's intellect should make so unworthy an abuse of it; in a few days we shall know from the sentence which is the greater rogue of the two. I am waiting for this affair to be over to reprimand him severely (*lui laver la tête*), and see whether at the age of fifty-six one cannot make him less of a rogue."

Eventually Frederick wrote to Voltaire, a very sensible letter complaining of his perpetual jealousies, wranglings, and ungenerosity to his brother writers Fréron and D'Arnauld. "At the very first, in a rather singular manner, you required of me that I should not engage Fréron to write me the news." And after telling the philosopher that he esteemed his wit, talents, and acquirements, and had been willing to give him a quiet asylum, the King ended up by saying, "In case you can make up your mind to live as a philosopher, I shall be very glad to see you; but if you give way to the impetuosity of your feelings and quarrel with everybody, you will do me no pleasure by coming hither, and may just as well remain at Berlin."

One great cause of complaint was the poet's constant intermeddling in State affairs; but it was Voltaire's pamphlet calling Maupertuis the "docteur Akakia" which made Frederick most angry. He told Voltaire, that "instead of statues being erected to him he deserved handcuffs," and had the whole Berlin edition of the book burned by the hangman in the Place d'Armes. Copies, however, had been printed everywhere; for which fact Frederick wrote to Maupertuis and en-

deavoured to console him, but he was unable to assuage this unhappy man's despair.

Eventually, after various quarrels with the King, Voltaire obtained leave to depart from Prussia. The King said good-bye pleasantly, and wished him a good journey. Voltaire, however, carried off with him a book of poems written by Frederick, which the latter was anxious to recover in order to preserve it from the poet's indiscretions and malignity. It contained, among other things, a burlesque, and a scoffing, licentious poem called the *Palladium*. Voltaire was arrested in Frankfort, with considerable indignity, by an agent of Frederick's, named Freytag, who greatly exceeded his instructions, which were only to recover the book of poems, a cross, and a key. Frederick sent orders to the over-zealous Freytag to allow Voltaire and his vulgar, extravagant niece Madame Denis to proceed; but the quarrel had now become acute, and Voltaire's intimacy with the Great Frederick was destroyed for ever.

Voltaire afterwards abused the King as freely as he had formerly flattered him, and yet, strange to say, their correspondence was subsequently renewed, when, although they criticised each other severely for the past, they once more indulged in reciprocal flatteries.

Voltaire lived for a great part of the remainder of his life with this niece Madame Denis, with whom, according to universal report, his relations were by no means creditable to himself or her. She was a young and flashy widow, moreover a firebrand. She had just joined the poet at the time of his arrest at Frankfort. Then for twelve days they were confined in an indifferent hostelry, with soldiers posted at the door by Freytag, who said subsequently that he would have put a bullet

through the contentious poet's brains rather than allow him to escape. Madame Denis thereupon feigned illness, and wrote bitter letters of complaint to all of Voltaire's friends at the Prussian Court, and to Frederick himself. Her rancour helped subsequently to fan the flames of Voltaire's resentment, causing him to give vent to his spite against Frederick in a clever but bitter poem called *La loi naturelle*, and in many other ways. If Voltaire could thus show himself to be petty, that he also knew how to be great he proved by his courageous conduct in connection with the *Affaire Calas*.

CHAPTER XIII

Intrigues, and "an Umbrella" for the Abbé

1758

THE amiable writer of pretty verses, the Abbé de Bernis, would willingly have been rid of his position as Foreign Minister by the middle of 1758. The Kingdom of France was by that time already on the verge of bankruptcy, and there seemed a danger, which even the King realised, of a revolt if the *rentes* were not paid to the poor people who had lent their all to the Government. So great was the anxiety in Paris that many began to think of emigration; among others, Jean Jacques Rousseau, as he states in his *Confessions*.

The alternative to bankruptcy seemed to be peace, and that was not a word which, bad as affairs were, the unfortunate Bernis dared at first to utter. And yet, since Rosbach, things were going from worse to worse. The English had landed on French soil and destroyed Cherbourg; they had also burned a hundred ships before Saint-Malo. A clerical and yet warrior Condé, brother of the late Monsieur le Duc, the Comte de Clermont, was being driven back to the Rhine in disorder. Thus, in the army as in the navy, all was disaster; the defeat in June of Clermont by Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick at Creveldt was crushing. There was no money with

which to rebuild ships—the annual expenditure being 500,000,000 livres, against maximum receipts of only 300,000,000. The King himself was living from hand to mouth, often vainly begging for loans from the bankers, who were tired of lending.

Bernis felt himself being driven almost as crazy as M. de Séchelles had already become. His actions showed this craziness, since he proposed to Madame de Pompadour to recall her greatest enemies—the Comte de Maurepas and M. de Chauvelin! To talk to Pompadour of the recall of Chauvelin, the avowed enemy of Austria, in such a crisis, indeed seems to have savoured of folly, as was also to talk about Maurepas, who had already proved himself the enemy of two successive mistresses, and was shrewdly suspected of having poisoned one of them—the Duchesse de Châteauroux.

In his despair Bernis turned to Choiseul, begging him to return from his embassy at Vienna and lend him a helping hand, being anxious on the first opportunity to slip out and leave the whole charge upon the shoulders of the other.

The handsome, polished rake, the Abbé de Bernis, was not indeed ambitious. Having been very poor, he had risked a certain amount to make a fortune; but he was not the man to bear the burden of the State upon his broad and well-formed shoulders. He had originally been placed with Madame de Pompadour by the King, who had been pleased with his poems. He was expected to form the Marquise—cure her of any traces of the *bourgeoisie* whence she sprang, many of her common expressions having been the subject of ill-natured jest at the Court at the time of her first arrival. To polish Madame d'Étioles, to raise her to the distinguished level

of Versailles, such had been the task originally entrusted to the Abbé de Bernis, Comte de Lyon. This was in 1745, and by 1752 the affection between the mistress and the mistress's instructor had increased very greatly. Pompadour, indeed, passed her life between the King and her elegant preceptor. She then made him Minister at Venice, where he was handy for Parma, and able to work in the Austrian plot with the Infanta. With this Princesse the amiable Abbé soon became far too intimate, and, becoming her man, was compromised by Louise Élisabeth in her criminal plan for involving France with Austria in order that she herself might obtain the Low Countries.

Under the thumb of the Infanta his lover, under the thumb of the Marquise de Pompadour his, at all events, intimate friend, the Abbé, as the war went on, found himself becoming more and more the mere slave of Maria Theresa, to whom he was obliged to pay a large subsidy. The time had, however, now arrived when he was forced to refuse his obedience to Austria, simply because he no longer had the means of paying. He wrote to Maria Theresa, showed her the dangerous state of affairs in France, and told her the danger of a revolt if any more money went out of the country. The Empress-Queen drew in her horns and retired before Frederick, back into her own Austrian dominions.

At the same time Bernis plucked up courage, and, in spite of the Marquise, spoke before the Council in favour of peace ; and on this subject he spoke admirably. The fear which he showed of the situation was catching ; the King was affected by his eloquence, the Dauphin and the rest of the Council followed suit. The result was that Louis authorised Bernis to treat for peace.

It required the folly, the vanity, and ambition of a woman to interpose in such a climax and say, "There must be no peace! The war must proceed." And this although France was absolutely powerless to help her colonies. In India, French arms were giving way before Lord Clive; in America, the loss of Louisiana and Canada seemed more than probable for want of reinforcement of ships and men; in Europe—in France itself—the King's armies and navies were reduced to impotence. In spite of all this, the Marquise de Pompadour worked upon Louis to continue the struggle on behalf of Austria.

Madame de Pompadour was a born actress. From the time of her arrival at Court she had constantly played before the King and the Court—in opera, tragedy, comedy, and farce. It mattered not what the species of representation might be, so long as on the boards of the Versailles theatre she took the principal part, received more than her share of the plaudits of the audience—only the King often yawned. And now, again, she was acting a leading rôle, one in which she expected to be applauded by three admirers, actresses like herself, although their position in the troupe of *comédiennes* was not so marked, they were not so conspicuous upon the stage.

The little band before whom she wished to shine and show off was composed of three women from that doubtful country Lorraine. Lying, as it did, on the borders of France, the Duchy of Lorraine held to both France and the Empire, was of both and yet of neither. The manners and morals of the State had always been deplorable; incest was a crime which was common in high places, while the noble *chanoinesses* of the convents at Remiremont and Poussay in the open scandal of their lives surpassed even the unbridled career of the *grands seigneurs*

—as example, the career at Poussay of the licentious young Chanoinesse de Béthisy, which ended in suicide. When the good-natured and benevolent Stanislas, ex-King of Poland, became the ruler of Lorraine in 1737, the morals of the Duchy did not improve. He took as his mistress Madame de Boufflers, a daughter of the old Prince de Craon, whose wife had herself been the mistress of one of the Dukes of Lorraine. Of this same family of Beauvau-Craon was the Maréchale de Mirepoix—she was sister to Madame de Boufflers, and one of Madame de Pompadour's three intimates. The other two were the Duchesse de Marsan, governess of the King's children, who had married into a suspicious family of Lorraine, and, last but not least, the Comte de Stainville's sister, who was a *chanoinesse*. With the Canoness, following the habits of their native Lorraine, Stainville, who some years later became the Duc de Choiseul, lived openly from 1750, when he first brought her to Paris. He was then thirty, and she—ten years younger—was tall and strongly built, had a very high-coloured complexion and a disagreeable voice. The Comte de Stainville, about the same time as he brought his younger sister to Paris, won the gratitude of Madame de Pompadour, and also a very rich and very young wife at her hands (Mademoiselle de Crozat-Duchâtel, aged twelve), by an act of treachery to a relative, in a very shady matter of Court intrigue. Madame de Choiseul, wife of the *menin* of the Dauphin, was aspiring to Pompadour's place with the King, and had nearly gained it, when Stainville threw in his weight on the other side and the Marquise kept her shameless position.

The Comte d'Argenson and his mistress and spy the Comtesse d'Estrades, who was, by the way, a cousin of

Pompadour, had imagined the plot to give the beautiful young Comtesse de Choiseul-Beaupré to the King. How nearly they succeeded will be seen from the following account, given by Houssaye:

"The intrigue was managed with so much skill that the King granted her an interview. There was great excitement in the Ministerial cabinet during the hour of the rendezvous. M. d'Argenson and Madame d'Estrades awaited the result with anxiety. Quesnay, the physician to the King, and a favourite of his, was present. All of a sudden Madame de Choiseul rushed in with her hair all dishevelled and in a charming state of disorder. Madame d'Estrades, to whom she was related, ran to meet her with open arms.

" 'Well, then?'

" 'Yes, I am loved! She is to be dismissed; he has given me his word for it!'

"A burst of delight resounded through the cabinet. Quesnay, it is known, was the friend of Madame de Pompadour, but he was also a friend of Madame d'Estrades. M. d'Argenson thought that he would at least remain neutral in this revolution.

" 'Doctor,' said he, 'there will be no change for you; we hope you will remain with us?'

" 'I, sir,' answered Quesnay coolly as he rose—'I was attached to Madame de Pompadour in her prosperity, I will remain so in her adversity.' He immediately departed."

This Quesnay, as we have already had occasion to remark, was an honest man. We may now go further and say that he and the Marquis d'Argenson, brother of the rascal Comte, were the only two consistently honest men in the most corrupt Court in Europe. Quesnay was

subsequently ennobled by Louis XV., who, vicious as he was himself, recognised this uprightness. The King gave him for coat-of-arms three pansies.

Before the Comte de Stainville came over to Madame de Pompadour's aid, defeating the further designs of his kinswoman by causing her to be shut up by her relatives, he had endeavoured to make himself feared by the King's mistress for the smartness of his sayings. After the fashion of Maurepas before him, he launched little biting, pithy remarks—posing, in fact, as one of the school of *Méchants*. The Marquise, already faded, was easily inquieted and disturbed at the least word against her coming from any one whom she could not crush and put into the Bastille for life. Protected as Stainville was by the Lorraine Duchesse de Marsan, he could say anything—do anything. Louis merely laughed, for instance, at his intimacy with his sister :

" Vous serez damné, Choiseul," dit le roi, en souriant.

" Mais vous, sire ? "

" Oh ! c'est différent. Moi, je suis l'Oint du Seigneur." (Saint-Priest).

When a man so much in the King's graces as this came suddenly round to her side, Pompadour's gratitude was boundless. She instantly arranged the rich marriage for him, giving over into his keeping—and his sister's—the poor little girl of twelve, whom for a long time they utterly disregarded as the child she was. She eventually developed into the most charming young lady, but remained neglected, even after Choiseul had given his sister a nominal husband in the shape of the Duc de Grammont.

The three women, Pompadour, Marsan, and Grammont, owing to her sauve manners, called the Maréchal

de Mirepoix *le petit chat*. Madame de Grammont, with her bold, decisive ways, might just as well, from her tenacity of purpose, have been called *le gros dogue* (the big bulldog). She it was who for many years inspired her brother with courage and energy, even later on to the extent of browbeating and terrifying the King. In the interim she prevented him from following his inclinations, which were to be nothing but a *petit maître* and hanger-on of women. The Duchesse de Grammont constantly reminded Choiseul that they had come to the Court with only 6,000 livres yearly between them, and had their way to make in the world. And she attached herself closely to Pompadour. Thus, with "la Marsan" and "la Mirepoix," there may be said to have been present a veritable little Austrian clique always in Pompadour's cabinet. It was for them—for their admiration, and, of course, that of their patroness Maria Theresa—that Pompadour acted, when she said there was to be no peace. In order that the war should go on it became necessary to get rid of the Abbé de Bernis, that she might the better be able to follow out her plans in her own way. One of the methods which the Marquise habitually employed with Louis XV., in order that she should maintain her position as *maîtresse en titre*, was that of fear. This was especially efficacious after the attempt of Damiens upon the King's life. She would say to him, "I protect you! The people hate me—on my head falls all the blame for everything. If you send me away, all the hatred which now falls on my head will be centred on yours."

This plan answered very well. Louis believed that the Marquise spoke the truth, and kept her accordingly. Nor did she mind the hatred while she felt herself so well

protected—so strong. Her ambition was everything. It rose above fear of hatred.

Bernis, however, did not like being hated, and came to her with despair in his eyes, pointing out that before them both yawned a gulf; moreover, that the public fury concerned them alone, they were accused of all the misfortunes that had fallen on the kingdom since they had made and signed the Treaty of Versailles, which had brought about the war.

Pompadour merely assumed an attitude of *distraite* reverie, staring in a kind of tragic trance as though not of this world, and allowing the poor Abbé to excite himself as much as he liked. Not in the least moved by his agitation, she replied, "I am the Minister of Limbo, uncertain, vague, and floating. I belong to the world of dreams." The Abbé was reduced to despair, for what could he, poor man! do as the Minister who was to save France when practically his only colleague in the Ministry proclaimed herself to be floating in a world of dreams? That did not seem to him as likely to save anybody, not even themselves. Bernis very much wished to save himself—save his head. He accordingly applied for a Cardinal's hat—he said, "as an umbrella." He well knew, from the history of the past in both France and Spain, that, ever since the days of Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin, other abbés who had been Ministers had ardently sought that umbrella. Had not Retz, Dubois, and Alberoni all said, "They don't hang Cardinals!" and had they not proved it in the face of various dangers?

Madame de Pompadour all the time was not floating or dreaming at all. She knew perfectly well what she wanted and was waiting for. With her three women

from the land of Lorraine pushing behind her, she was working underground to be rid of her charming companion for so long, her delightful Abbé, who was so afraid of going on with a war which might certainly ruin France, but which, while all else was ruined, would leave her supreme. Bernis was most anxious to assist his colleague in getting rid of him, if only he could contrive to walk off decently from the scene under what he called "an excellent umbrella." He reminded the King that he had promised him this protection from the gathering clouds, and himself wrote to Rome that the weather looked rainy.

It was indeed more lowering for the Abbé than appeared on the surface, for his charming Princesse, the Infanta, had involved him in the mazes of a subtle intrigue which might bring a very heavy storm about his ears—expose him not to rain-showers only, but lightning flashes and thunder-bolts. So deeply had this romantic, ambitious daughter of France dragged Bernis in with her that it was quite on the cards that he might, before long, find several foreign Kings crying out for his head—possibly might find, in addition, both the King of France and the Dauphin turning violently against him. The intrigue into which the Abbé had now plunged at the bidding of his Royal inamorata, the wife of the Infante Don Philip, Duke of Parma, was indeed of a very scandalous nature, and concerned the succession to the crown of Spain.

In August, 1758, the amiable Portuguese wife of Ferdinand VI., King of Spain, died childless; and Ferdinand himself seemed to be rapidly going downhill. He was known to have no love for his half-brother and heir, Don Carlos, King of Naples and Sicily; the

Infanta's idea was, therefore, to get Ferdinand to adopt her husband Philip, his younger half-brother. But thus to exclude Don Carlos, who was hated by the Jesuits in Spain, required an audacious scandal, in which the Jesuits, through Ricci their General, were ready to take a hand. This consisted in proclaiming Don Carlos illegitimate; no son of the late Philip V., uncle of the King of France, but the offspring of Cardinal Alberoni and Queen Elizabeth Farnese of Parma. Thus Carlos would have been tied to his kingdom of Naples, where he had already shown himself the bitter enemy of the Jesuits and the Inquisition, and the Jesuits, both in Spain and in France, would have been saved from that which befell them—first expulsion, then the abolition of their order.

We need not here go deeply into the probabilities for and against this story being true. It is sufficient to recall the fact that Alberoni, an Italian from Parma himself, drew Elizabeth, the niece of the Duke of Parma, practically from a garret to make her the second Queen of Philip V.; further, that her first son, Don Carlos, was not born until upwards of a year and a half after the marriage, and resembled Alberoni in many respects. Alberoni may have reminded Elizabeth Farnese that when Anne of Austria, wife of Louis XIII., had no heir for many years, she secured her position by becoming the mother of a Prince (Louis XIV.), of whom not the King, but the handsome de Comminges was supposed to be the father. These were, at any rate, some of the arguments used by those in the plot, and made all the more plausible by the fact of the bitter hatred shown eventually by Elizabeth to Alberoni, and her attempt to get him assassinated, and so shut his mouth for ever, when he was driven from the Court of Spain.

In order, however, that the Infanta should be able to succeed in such a dangerous plan it was necessary that her father should still be for her what he was in 1749 and 1750, when she was a girl of twenty. He, however, was no longer the same to her. Moreover, by seeking, among other crowns, the succession to the kingdom of Poland for herself, she had angered her brother the Dauphin, whose wife, Maria Josepha of Saxony, daughter of Augustus III., the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, had other views. The Dauphine ardently longed to see her own brother succeed her father on the Polish throne. Madame Adélaïde was also against the Infanta, and, therefore, she practically had no one for her but he who may well be called her Alberoni, that is, the Abbé de Bernis. Of him, after he had already called Choiseul to help him at Versailles, the Infanta was deprived by a horrible trick—another intrigue! The Court Cabal pretended that, after already retiring to rest, the Infanta called Bernis to her darkened room and said, from her couch, "*Mettez-vous là*"! Instead of Bernis, a man of the Dauphin's entered the room. This story finished Bernis with the King, who was always furiously jealous of his daughters. The Cardinal's hat arrived a day or two after his disgrace, on November 30th, 1758, when the King flung it at him, it was said, "like a bone to a dog." Thus he was able, after all, to march out under his umbrella when he departed into exile to Soissons. Some time afterwards he was made Ambassador to Rome, being sent thither to demand the suppression of the Jesuits. There he lived the rest of his life, and eventually died in poverty, subsisting solely upon a pension from the Court of Spain.

CHAPTER XIV

A Spiteful Play, and Mademoiselle de Romans

1759—1761

WHILE sending Bernis away, Louis XV. discharged a spiteful arrow at his daughter the Infanta, writing her a note in which he said, sarcastically, that he had no doubt but that she "would be pleased at the satisfaction which he thus gave her."

This daughter, who had been once so tenderly loved, for whose sake the King sacrificed the lives of half a million of men, never recovered from the affront thus offered to her. She survived but a year the mortification of seeing the new treaty now made by Choiseul with Austria, in which no mention was made of her name—of her inheritance of the Low Countries. Nor was there ever any further mention of the plot to replace Don Carlos by Don Philip as heir to Ferdinand VI. The matter was entirely forgotten, with the result that when Ferdinand died in 1759, Carlos succeeded him as Charles III. At the same time the new King of Spain made over his throne of the two Sicilies to his third son Ferdinand. Of his two elder sons, one became the heir to the Crown of Spain, and the second was an epileptic idiot, incapable of reigning. The wife of Charles III., who was Amelia of Saxony, the sister of

the Dauphine, died the year after her husband ascended the throne in Madrid; and in the following year, owing to Choiseul's famous Family Compact of the Bourbons, Charles became involved in the quarrels of France with England.

By the new treaty made by Madame de Pompadour, through the agency of Choiseul, with Austria, everything was given to Maria Theresa. France reserved nothing for herself; she agreed to pay Austria 8,000,000 livres yearly, to subsidise Sweden and Saxony for the war against Frederick, and to give over to Maria Theresa all conquests which she might make, or anything that she had already taken. Was there ever seen a more infamous treaty? Was ever a country more basely betrayed than France by this treaty of 1759? Such was the Ministry of the Mistress! The only possible future advantage to Louis XV. was that his granddaughter, the little Isabelle, was betrothed to the young Joseph of Austria. France also now bound herself to ensure the future election to the Imperial Crown of this young Joseph. Thus, almost as in the time of the Guises, was the spectacle to be seen of France entirely ruled by the influence of Lorraine. There was a regular invasion of France—the relations and friends of Choiseul, arriving from Lorraine, held all the principal offices.

The King was ill during the time of the making of the treaty, and Choiseul, a follower of Voltaire, went further than the philosopher in his unbelief. Nevertheless, he profited by the King's religious fears and tendencies to devotion at such times as illness attacked him, to point out that no expiation could be more agreeable to God than the crushing of the infidel Frederick, the mocker who scoffed also at Versailles, and called

his female greyhounds his Marquises de Pompadour. Louis showed his weakness by agreeing to everything that was suggested to him. Even when he was well, all that really interested him seemed to be his personal and private speculations in wheat; the great affairs of the State, the condition of bankruptcy which came with Choiseul's policy, were to Louis matters of far less moment.

While Choiseul now established a mere man of letters, named Silhouette, at the head of the Finances, it was only by a system of fraud, first upon the farmers-general, and then upon the bankers, that the new Contrôleur-Général was able to procure the millions wherewith to create the new maritime force with which Choiseul now proposed to invade England. Wonderful was the plan for the preparation of this new Armada! The principal fleet was prepared far away in the Mediterranean, at Toulon. To join a second squadron at Brest it would, therefore, have to face all the perils of the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay in the presence of an active foe well supplied with warships. England, Scotland, and Ireland were all to be attacked at once. The pirate, or, at best, privateer, Thurot was to sail from Dunkirk and invade Ireland. From Brest, the Duc d'Aiguillon was to sail with 12,000 men for Scotland; while from Havre the Prince de Soubise, with 50,000 men on flat-bottomed boats, was to proceed directly up the Thames to London.

It was a wonderful scheme, certainly! Equally wonderful was the choice of such commanders—setting the pirate on one side as a brave man—as Soubise, the loser of Rosbach, and d'Aiguillon, the famed conqueror of—the Duchesse de Châteauroux!

For, as Duc d'Agenois, the sole claim to fame hitherto

of the nephew of the Duc de Richelieu was that he had been the successful lover of Madame de la Tournelle, and had contested her with the King. It was only by a mean trick to his nephew that the pander Richelieu procured the momentary disfavour of d'Agenois with Madame de la Tournelle, whereby she yielded to the King—for the duchy of Châteauroux and other advantages. The young widow never, however, ceased to love, until she died in 1744, the noble who became later Duc d'Aiguillon. Later d'Aiguillon became famous for another achievement—he shared with his uncle the glory of giving the low woman, Mademoiselle Lange, or Madame Dubarry, to the King, whereby Louis was able to overthrow the tyranny of Choiseul and all his Stainville hangers-on.

While such large preparations were being made to invade the three kingdoms, in Canada the unfortunate Marquis de Montcalm, greatly in need of help, was vainly crying for assistance. No help was sent to him, and he died before Quebec on September 13th, 1759; when his brave conqueror, Wolfe, died also, in the moment of victory. In India, the furious madman, the Irish Comte Lally Tolendal, had now replaced Dupleix, who had been recalled to France, where he was shamefully treated. Lally, by his disregard for caste privileges, his rages and barbarities, soon ended all the good work done by the capable General Bussy, son-in-law of Dupleix. Thus, although Lally had great bravery, he soon had raised all India against the French by his folly, and was declining more and more before the growing ascendancy of Lord Clive. In February, 1759, Lally failed signally before Madras, of which he was forced to raise the siege, and, as Bussy was taken prisoner by Colonel Coote, the

French power was now confined to the immediate neighbourhood of Pondicherry.

The Minister of War in 1759 was the brave and capable Maréchal de Belle-Isle, Duc de Vernon, now seventy-six years old. Vainly he strove to effect that reform in the middle of a disastrous war which the Comte d'Argenson should have effected in time of peace. Despite his grief at having lost his only son, the Comte de Gisors, in the battle of Creveldt, of having lost also his brother the Chevalier de Belle-Isle, the old warrior endeavoured to perform the impossible, and gave all his remaining energies to the State. Reform of the army at such a time was, however, hopeless. It was filled with men of the Court, there were nearly as many officers as soldiers. In the cavalry the proportion was one officer to only three men; in the infantry one to every four.

If anything were required to complete the disorganisation of the army, it was to be found in the dissensions of the Generals. Of this we have already had an example in the case of the Comte de Maillebois and the Maréchal d'Estrées; and at the famous battle of Minden, in Prussia, on August 1st, 1759, the quarrels between the Maréchal de Contades and the Duc de Broglie, or Broglio, assisted Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick in winning the battle almost as much as the bravery of the English, Hessians, and Hanoverians, whom he commanded. That Prince, however, experienced among his own forces an example of the insubordination so prevalent in the French army. Lord George Sackville, afterwards Lord George Germaine, refused to charge with his cavalry the disorganised French troops. A court martial dismissed Lord George, but he was restored to favour by George III., and became Secretary of State in 1776.

The defeat of the French army at Minden closely preceded that of the French Toulon fleet, which was destroyed on August 17th, near Gibraltar, the defeat of Admiral Byng being thus avenged. After this the idea of sending the flat-bottomed boats to the Thames was abandoned. The Duc d'Aiguillon, however, gained the credit of repulsing the British who had landed at Saint-Cast, in Brittany. He thus became a hero for Madame de Pompadour; but Duclos has shown that he behaved like a coward, and the battle was won by the Bretons without their General.

If the invasion of England by way of London was given up, the expeditions to Scotland and Ireland were not. The Duc d'Aiguillon, however, refused to go with the troops on the transports to join the Admiral with the fleet at Brest, insisting that as he was Governor of Brittany it was the duty of M. de Conflans to come and fetch him at Morbihan. By this prudence, equal to that which he had displayed at Saint-Cast, d'Aiguillon escaped sharing the fate of Conflans when the English fleet, of equal numbers to his own, attacked him near the island from which M. de Belle-Isle took his name. Admiral de Conflans was also prudent, and endeavoured to escape the British squadron by running in among the rocks off the coast of Brittany. Two of the following British vessels went on the breakers; but four of the French ships were destroyed, de Conflans setting fire to his own ship. Seven of the remaining men-of-war, continuing their flight, got stuck fast in the mud in the estuary of the Vilaine, and a few hid themselves in Rochefort. Shortly after the English captured Belle-Isle. Thus was the Scotch expedition disposed of. Nevertheless, the bold corsair Thurot carried out faithfully

his own share in the enterprise. He sailed from Dunkirk on October 15th, 1759, cruised all around the three Kingdoms, and at length caused an alarm.

Thurot made, with the three remaining frigates of his squadrons, for Ireland, landed, took the town and castle of Carrickfergus on February 17th, 1760, and got himself killed. This Thurot was a very gallant man, who, when once a prisoner in England, escaped by rowing across the Channel alone in a boat. He was of Irish origin.

The condition of the finances after all these disasters was such that the King was no longer able to pay the expenses of Versailles, being indebted to the extent of ten months' pay to all of his household. On his attempting to raise money by *octroi* duties upon the cities, the Parliaments became revolutionary. At Besançon they hanged the clerk sent to levy the *octroi*; the Parliament of Paris also hanged a *huissier*. Half of the Parliament of Besançon was exiled; but the magistrates of Paris, not intimidated, refused to adopt the reasonable suggestion of M. de Silhouette to levy an equal impost on all alike. Thus affairs came to a deadlock; Choiseul was defeated in matters of finance as much as he was by sea and by land.

As revenge he ignominiously dismissed Silhouette, whose very name became a jest, and the synonym for a shadow. As Silhouette was a philosopher, a follower of Voltaire, this action was a sop thrown by Choiseul to the Parliament of Paris, which hated the philosophers. The *Encyclopédie* was also abandoned to the men of the robe. It was suspended in this same year 1759.

In order still more to divert public opinion from the contemplation of the state of disaster to which he had

reduced France by his renewed treaties with Austria, Choiseul conceived the idea of causing a piece to be performed in which the philosophers were rendered universally ridiculous. By this piece the King, who scarcely ever laughed, the Dauphin, and the devout party behind him were regaled with the spectacle of d'Alembert and Diderot enacting the part of pickpockets, while Jean Jacques Rousseau—carrying out his own theories, and acting on a phrase in a letter written to him by Voltaire—" returned to a state of nature." He came on the stage on all fours, solemnly browsing on a lettuce.

This comedy of *Les Philosophes*, was written by a brilliant but evil-minded young genius, named Palissot. His origin being Lorraine, he naturally found a protector in Choiseul. He had become famous at twelve, and at thirteen sustained a thesis of theology. When he wrote the comedy against the philosophers, the young fellow had reached the age of twenty-five. Being a youth of a cunning and designing disposition, Palissot had early discovered a road to fortune by writing partisan plays for the party of the *dévots* ; and for this particular play he was rewarded with the receipts of a duty on tobacco and the monopoly of selling foreign journals in France.

He reached Choiseul through the consumptive Princesse de Robecq, the Duc's mistress. This young lady was the stepdaughter of the Duchesse de Luxembourg, a woman who had proved a veritable Messalina before she married the colourless Duc de Luxembourg—whose first wife she had led into a condition of degradation which proved her downfall. The Luxembourgs, towards the end of his career, became the patrons—strange patrons indeed !—of Rousseau ; but the Princesse de Robecq, who was hated by her stepmother, herself

detested all the philosophers. She was at the same time—a common mixture in those days—devout and depraved. Although well aware that she had not long to live, this consumptive girl gave herself up violently to the delights of unbridled passion at the same time that she was a violent adherent of the Church, as represented by the Jesuit faction—that of the Dauphin. She it was who urged Choiseul, for her own expiation and the glory of God, to give her, before she died, the satisfaction of seeing the impious philosophers dragged in the dust. Diderot was well aware of this. When he found Choiseul and Pompadour withdrawing their protection from the *Encyclopédie*, he accused no one but Choiseul's sickly paramour, Madame de Robecq.

It was not without peril that such a piece should be played. How would Voltaire take it, who had latterly been caressed by Choiseul—had written for the Austrian faction against Frederick? Might not the public also become justly angered? The public at large honoured the philosophers, delighted in their progressive ideas, which maintained that the poor man had rights as well as the *grand seigneur* and the rich and untaxed Churchman. But while Choiseul wished to confine the attack on the lights of modern literature to a written libel, Madame de Robecq was inexorable, insisting upon a play in which they should be publicly ridiculed. When the piece had been written for her by young Palissot, it seemed doubtful if the actors and actresses could be prevailed upon to perform it, although the great dramatist Voltaire was not touched in it, and Choiseul had written him affectionate or coaxing letters in order to prevent an outbreak on his part when his brethren should be torn in pieces.

From an engraving after a picture taken in his 70th year.

VOLTAIRE.

Fréron, a literary man who was the author of some two hundred and fifty volumes of the *Année littéraire*, was the creature of Madame Adélaïde; he was also the bitter enemy of Voltaire. Fréron it was who was employed therefore to coerce the theatre—the actors whom Palissot himself had no power to compel to receive his abominably spiteful play. Taking the piece to the principal players, Fréron said insolently, "Deliberate if you like, but it will be played in spite of you!"

That the threat came direct from the Court was well understood; there was nothing to be done but accept and act the *Philosophes*. The great actress Mademoiselle Clairon was absent, but upon her return she was most indignant, saying that it was shameful that the actors should lend themselves to help to destroy those who helped them to earn their bread. Clairon declared that she was disgusted with the world and would leave it, like Rousseau, to live in a corner of the woods.

It had been *à propos* of Rousseau's teachings that man should return more closely to a state of nature that Voltaire had written to him, "I return to all-fours. Come and browse with me." With the exception of making Jean Jacques arrive upon the stage in this ridiculous fashion, he was well treated in the piece. Owing to his recent publication of the sentimental *Nouvelle Héloïse*, which made of romantic love the fashion, Rousseau was at that period far too popular to be represented as a worthless character. Accordingly he was represented as Crispin, the honest philosopher, the *Deus ex machina* who upsets the scoundrelly tricks of his band of brothers. The clever, if often indecent, writer Duclos, also, who had succeeded Voltaire as

Historiographer of France, was spared save for one little allusion. The author of the racy *Histoire de la Baronne de Luz* and the *Confessions du Comte de* * * *, owed his immunity from attack to the fact that he was the intimate friend of the Abbé de Bernis and Madame de Pompadour. The *dévote* Princesse de Robecq, who had but one month more to live, rose from her bed, and, pale spectre as she was, caused Palissot the author to conduct her in person to the theatre, in order that she might witness the triumph of the cause of religion—and enjoy her own.

The success of the piece was not, however, what had been hoped for—it fell flat. Clever and biting as it was, the sight of such writers as Diderot, Frontin, and d'Alembert debased to the level of comic swindlers and thieves failed to amuse. The play was felt to be a cowardly abuse of power, striking at the greatest minds that had brought honour to France. Even the Dauphin was at the pains to say that he had nothing to do with its production, that he washed his hands of the affair. Thus the whole odium of the production of the *Philosophes* fell upon Choiseul, and the more so since, before she died, his Madame de Robecq forced him to reward the author Palissot by making his fortune.

The excess of romantic sensibility created by Rousseau's *Julie*, meanwhile, continued to spread. Even the toughest of hearts, such as that of the Lieutenant de Police, Bertin, were affected by the fashionable vogue, to the extent that this representative of Court justice found himself rendered supremely ridiculous by an adventuress of the name of d'Arnoult.

In his *Emile*, which was found almost boring after the delicious *Julie*, Jean Jacques secured another success

over the susceptible human heart. In it the author preached loudly his doctrine of " conversion to nature," especially holding up to admiration the beauties of the joys of maternity, the duty of every mother to suckle her own infant. The hitherto callous Parisian mothers were touched. Instead of, as heretofore, relegating her offspring to a wet-nurse, the gay and giddy young married woman was now to be seen attending the theatre, dinner parties, and balls with the baby at the breast! In good sooth! an extraordinary race, these French!—like Dryden's Duke of Buckingham, " ever in extremes." No one recognised this trait of the national character more than Voltaire when he wrote to M. de Constant: " I always find it difficult to conceive how so agreeable a nation can at the same time be so ferocious, how it can so easily pass from the opera to the Saint Bartholomew—be at one time made up of dancing apes and at another of howling bears—be so ingenious and so idiotic both together—at one time so brave and at another so dastardly."

With the universal resurrection of love caused by Rousseau, Madame de Pompadour, finding the King growing weary of his abominable Parc aux Cerfs, determined upon a stroke which in earlier days she would have feared—no less than to provide the Monarch with a creature worthy of his adoration, to be chosen from the respectable, but not the noble, classes. Her object in so doing was, in the general condition of disaster and disorder which obtained, to keep Louis occupied and apart from those affairs of State which she and Choiseul had taken so completely into their own hands. Accordingly she employed Bertin, Sartines, and the police to look about for some beautiful young lady.

The required beauty was found by the police, accordingly, in 1760. The keeper of the gaming-house in the Palais-Royal was the daughter of a lawyer at Grenoble, and she said that all that could possibly be required would be found in her own young sister: "une belle personne et la plus belle du monde, neuve et jusque-là bien gardée." Here was an attraction indeed, in times when but few young women were *bien gardée*, especially if they happened to be the "most beautiful girl in the world."

Mademoiselle de Romans was all that she was said to be—aged nineteen and most perfectly beautiful in form and feature. Being excessively tall, six feet in height, she resembled a statue of Minerva. Her hair was wonderful, being so thick and long that she was able to drape herself with it as with a veil. She wore it low on her head on account of her height, a mode which soon became the fashion, imitated even by those who were dwarfish in stature. It appeared to Paris almost in the light of a purification when the King, who so hoggishly grovelled in a Parc aux Cerfs, became the possessor of such an innocent and worthy person. He too was credited with having found his Julie; for surely he could experience nothing but love for one so flawless as Mademoiselle de Romans. At least such was the opinion of Paris. She was brought in great state to Versailles, being publicly fetched in a Royal carriage with six horses—this public entry proving the connivance of the Marquise de Pompadour.

Upon January 12th, 1761, this magnificent and most amiable young lady bore a son to the King, and the child inherited her beauty. Following the fashion of the day, she nursed this child, and did so daily publicly

in the Bois de Boulogne, although in a retired part of the Bois.

Here Madame de Pompadour went, incognito, with her waiting-lady Madame du Hausset, and got into conversation with Mademoiselle de Romans, pretending to admire the baby, which, like the mother, was "all bedizened with the most beautiful laces."

After seeing the lovely mother and child the Marquise, who herself had no child by the King, became violently jealous; the more so as she feared that Louis would cause the little boy to be legitimised, in a similar manner to that in which Louis XIV. legitimised the Duc du Maine and the other children of Madame de Montespan. Madame de Pompadour therefore determined that the child should be ravished from the unfortunate young mother, and the cold-blooded Louis made no objection, after she had persuaded him that he was "compromised" by this lovely girl.

The little boy was torn from his mother and spirited away, while her papers were confiscated. Fortunately for her, Mademoiselle de Romans had, however, already placed in safety, elsewhere, the King's letters and the *acte de baptême* which proved the Royal parentage of her infant. For fifteen or sixteen years the broken-hearted mother searched for her child in vain, but after the accession of Louis XVI. she succeeded in getting the young King to interest himself in her misfortunes. Louis XVI. found the little boy, for whose maintenance a large sum had been given to a clerk. This clerk had kept the money and neglected the child, in spite of the revenue of 1,000 crowns yearly given to him when Sartines of the Police had kidnapped the infant. He was found at Longjumeau, dressed merely in a linen smock frock,

when Louis XVI. restored him to his mother. This boy became the Abbé de Bourbon, and exactly resembled the King, his father, in appearance and disposition. He was handsome, indolent, and libertine, his bad qualities being doubtless the result of being deprived of a mother's care in his childhood.

Although so inhuman as to deprive her of her child, Louis XV. did not cease to visit Mademoiselle de Romans. Even after the death of Madame de Pompadour he was visiting her at Brimborion. The Abbé de Soulavie tells us that in 1765 "her hair was in such quantity that she covered herself with it as with a cloak when she received the King, in a voluptuous pose upon a *canapé de taffetas*. Louis XV. then called her his *belle Madeleine*, and admired the beauty of her body and the enchantment of her attitudes." She still retained her beauty in 1792, when fifty years of age. Mademoiselle de Romans had then for years past been the wife of an officer named M. de Cavanhac. She could never be reproached with any evil action during the time of her favour, and she always remained beautiful, interesting, and possessed of a good disposition.

CHAPTER XV

"Mangeons du Jésuite!"

1761—1764

It was in 1761 that the Duc de Choiseul conceived the happy idea—for himself—of forming the famous Compact of the various reigning Bourbon families. France, Spain, Naples, and Parma—of whom the last three were ruled by Spanish Bourbons, two being sons and one a grandson of Philip V., the uncle of Louis XV.—were parties to this Compact. The Family Compact was a juggler's trick, meant at the same time to dazzle the world and to catch Louis by his weakest side, his lifelong attraction for Spain and things Spanish. The public in France had been crying out, and with reason, that Austria was not sufficiently supporting her ally. The cries of the multitude, so plainly audible to—that good Austrian—Choiseul, taught him a lesson which Pompadour had failed to learn, the danger of allowing *ce bon public* to understand how utterly and irretrievably France stood committed to Maria Theresa. He accordingly himself joined in the outcry against the treason of Austria; but—while thus menacing and complaining—he gave to Maria Theresa another army.

Choiseul maintained himself at the summit of power by this clever trick, which went to the very heart of the King, and dazzled him like all the rest.

It was such a grand response to those who reproached him with having only one ally, for Louis to be able to answer, "One ally! And all the Bourbons of Europe! are they then to count for nothing? From Spain to Sicily, have I not but to hold up my little finger and will they not rally to my standard?" Utterly oblivious of the fact that ever since the year 1702 the blood of France had been poured out in torrents to satisfy the ambitions of all these Spanish Bourbons, that their individual weakness had been proved over and over again, and their utter inability to do anything without France, the people of France were one and all deceived by the juggling trick of the great magician, Choiseul.

But not so the people of England—at all events not the great Commoner, William Pitt! He smiled, knowing full well that Choiseul was but doubling the possible prey of England, and instantly proposed a great extension of the war. Pitt insisted that there should be no foolish delay in waiting for Spain to declare war, but that immediate measures should be taken to seize the great Spanish treasure fleet now on its way from the Indies to Cadiz. He further maintained that an instant blow should be struck at the Isthmus of Panama, and an attack made on the Spanish dominions in the New World. But his colleague the Duke of Newcastle and the remainder of the Whigs failed to support Pitt; the newly ascended King George III. also violently opposed his farseeing plans. Pitt accordingly resigned, to the delight of France and the despair of Frederick of Prussia, who, with the rise to office of the mere courtier, Lord Bute, was to lose his English subsidies. Bute was the simple agent of the King's will, and the King, being now anxious to

conclude peace at any price, showed a most shameless indifference to the national honour in seeking to abandon Frederick to his fate. Bute offered, in the most barefaced manner, to make peace with Austria for the noble Prussian on disgraceful terms, which would compel him to restore Silesia to Maria Theresa. It was only the determined resolution of the great Frederick, aided by a most fortunate chance, which enabled him to hold his own in this crisis. This chance was the death of Elizabeth of Russia, and the accession of the young Peter III., who professed the most unbounded admiration for Frederick and all his works. This enabled the King of Prussia to make a treaty of peace with Russia, at Hubertsberg, without losing a foot of territory to his late Muscovite foe.

Meanwhile, Lord Bute secretly informed Choiseul that now he had only to ask for peace to have it. It was a splendid opportunity for France, one that should have been seized with both hands. She might lose something, it is true, but how much more she stood to lose if she continued the struggle! But Choiseul was tied by the promises to Austria to give up to her all that France held in Germany. This he could not do if he concluded peace with England, whose King was also the ruler of Hanover. Maria Theresa and all the Austrian cabal at Versailles would have united to fall upon Choiseul, to tear him from the seat in which he ardently wished to remain. He accordingly preferred to sacrifice his country (if indeed France were the country of this Lorrainer), and to push Spain ahead, in the hope that Spain would conquer—for France—Portugal, the ally of England.

It was a fine chimerical plan, to push Spain thus into

the fire to pull out his chestnuts for him, and dishonest as it was foolishly imagined. For Spain, so easily accessible to British fleets at all points, was bound to get all the kicks and none of the half-pence. As for reducing Portugal, now in the hands of a very strong man and strong Minister, the Marquis of Pombal, it was an accomplishment far beyond the powers of Charles III. and all his armies. Louis XV., however, open mouthed, swallowed all the baits which the ingenious Choiseul offered him, and the war went on merrily—for England!

While, floating on the top of his Compact, Choiseul landed into the position of a real First Minister—such as that occupied by a Mazarin or a Dubois—he did not neglect to strengthen himself with continued importations from Lorraine. Choiseuls and Stainvilles—brothers, cousins, and nephews—arrived at his call. Holding the Foreign Affairs himself, he put his cousin the Duc de Praslin into an office communicating with his own, and thus Choiseul held the War Office and Marine also. Through Bertin, his creature, he annexed the Finances as well, and, as a crowning touch, awarded to himself the very lucrative post of Colonel des Suisses. The Maréchal de Belle-Isle—who was grandson of Mazarin's great assistant in money-getting, Fouquet—had died opportunely for Choiseul in January, 1761. The coast was therefore clear for him in the matter of all honours and perquisites in connection with the war department.

Belle-Isle, in dying, left all his property to the King. As upon the death of his gallant son the Comte de Gisors at Creveldt the late Minister of War had promised to Louis this legacy, he had been assured by the King his position as War Minister for so long as he might live. Whether as a soldier or a

diplomatist, Belle-Isle had been for many years the boldest and most capable man in France, although in his earlier years under the Regent he had not shown himself overscrupulous in the manner in which he carried out the behests of Philippe d'Orléans and his rascally Minister Dubois. Unfortunately for France, during the reign of Louis XV. the basest Court intrigues and jealousies repeatedly counteracted Belle-Isle's efforts to act loyally in unison with Frederick, by whom he was most highly appreciated.

By the generous manner in which, in the winter of 1742, he consented to repair the faults of the incompetent and jealous Broglio, and made his wonderful retreat with the starving French army from Prague, the name of Belle-Isle will remain for ever famous. His death removed an enemy of Maria Theresa, but the influence of the Marquise de Pompadour had long since rendered nugatory his efforts to prevent the King from placing himself under the thumb of Austria.

In spite of his annexation of all the ministerial posts, Choiseul continued to find himself a beggar for money at the doors of the high-stomached Parliament—always grumbling, always menacing. To turn their threatening attitude from himself elsewhere, the Lorrainer had a happy thought, one which accorded well with his great stroke of the Family Compact. Not long since the play of *Candide* had appeared. A successful *mot* in that play had been "Mangeons du Jésuite!" Choiseul now adapted this for personal use, and when he too said to the Parliament, "Now let us eat some Jesuit," the men of the robe were ready to become not his enemies but his devoted slaves; the slaves also of Madame de Pompadour, who since her repulse by the

Père de Sacy had become a more confirmed Jesuit-hater than ever!

The man who most hated the Jesuits in all Europe was probably Charles III. of Spain, who was well aware of the disgraceful plot by which they had sought to prevent him from succeeding his brother. Upon arrival at Madrid from Naples, he found almost every office filled with creatures of the Jesuits, and determined to get rid of them as soon as possible. To do this he availed himself of the services of their rivals the Dominicans. While appointing himself as the Chief of the Inquisition, Charles made a Dominican monk his Vicar-General.

Both Spain and Portugal had between 1754 and 1756 the gravest cause for discontent with the action of the Jesuits in the New World. There the members of the Order of Jesus had completely asservised the Indians of the southern continent of America. These easily led peoples, far less independent than the bold Redskins of the north, had been so entirely subjugated by the priests as to be their complete slaves in Paraguay and elsewhere. This became only too evident when Spain and Portugal sought to make an exchange of some territories. The Indians rose at the command of the Jesuits, and, by force of arms, sought to resist the will of the two Crowns.

In Spain, as we have said, Charles found that the very administration was completely in the hands of the Jesuits—they were, in fact, supreme. In Portugal they to a great extent held the power through the great families. They were detested in the country, as representing there Spanish influence. Nevertheless, they gave to King Joseph I. as First Minister the Marquis of Pombal, a man of their own selection. This Pombal

was, however, bold and violent by nature; he had also seen the world, travelled in foreign countries which were not Jesuit-ridden, such as England. Backed up by the Dominicans, Pombal astonished the Society of Jesus in 1758 by suddenly launching a manifesto of the greatest severity. He exiled all Jesuit confessors from the Royal Palaces, replacing them by Dominicans. These events had taken place at the very time that the Infanta and Bernis had been plotting with Ricci, the General of the Jesuits, whose letters Choiseul had seen, there being therefore no doubt of his complicity, the object of the Jesuit fraternity being of course to retain the ascendancy of Spain through the Infanta.

To return to Portugal. The young King Joseph had a liaison with the Marchioness of Tavora, and was in the habit of visiting her nightly. The family of Tavora, like another great family, that of Aveyro, was strictly under Jesuitical influences. When the King had been surprised, and wounded, while carrying out his amorous adventures, it was proved that the Jesuits had been consulted before the attack on Joseph, and had authorised the crime of regicide.

Pombal now exercised the greatest severity against the grandees concerned in the affair—decapitating, breaking on the wheel, and burning. Not content with this, he caused the Inquisition to condemn the Jesuit Principal, Father Malagrida, to be strangled and burned as a heretic, and his possessions to be seized. As Rome became angry, Pombal then seized upon all the possessions of the Jesuits, and caused themselves to be flung out of the country into Italy.

When in 1759 the ships of Pombal had thrown the Jesuit fathers in a state of destitution upon the Italian

coasts, France—or, at all events, Versailles—cried out that this was treating them too severely. Even Voltaire, in spite of his warfare against his old masters, retained some affection for them; moreover, he wished to see them maintained, thinking that by their means would come about the downfall of the whole Church. England also, especially all the Roman Catholic families, showed sympathy for the Jesuits, and some great English ladies associated themselves with the Dauphin for their preservation.

The people at large in France did not bother their heads greatly about this question of Jesuits or no Jesuits. It was, however, a very burning one with the Parliaments, with their Jansenistical tendencies, smarting under the sense of old injuries. In playing into the Parliamentary hands, Choiseul himself displayed no personal animosity. Nor was it necessary. The Order of Jesus had condemned itself by the action of Father Lavalette in Martinique, which had caused universal disgust. This was his bankruptcy to the extent of 3,000,000 of livres in a commercial concern which he had started. The Order of Jesus refused to pay up the defalcations of their *confrère*, but their responsibility was declared by the Parliament, amid general joy and satisfaction.

After this affair it was the action of the Royal Family, notably the maladroit and intemperate interference of Madame Adélaïde on their behalf, which helped to crush the order. To intimidate their opponents an order of the Grand Council was issued, condemning a notary on the charge of being *suspected* of having forged a judgment of the Council against the Jesuits. It was sought to hang this notary for the act of the Parliament, and he was actually sent to the galleys. The

unfortunate man cut his throat, and by the same blow killed the order. The Parliament commenced to ask the Jesuits, "Who are you, my good people, after all? Come! let us see your famous statutes of Ignatius Loyola, which you have hitherto kept so closely concealed." The King interfered, endeavouring to protect them; whereupon the Parliament refused the taxes. Louis thereupon went through the performance of holding a Bed of Justice to enforce his will. With great military demonstration the King entered Paris from Versailles on July 21st, 1761. But news had just come to hand of the loss of a battle on July 16th. The Parliament therefore mocked at the King's thunders and military display, and insisted upon having the Constitutions of the Jesuits brought before them for examination.

Far from the men of the robe being intimidated, it was the King's turn to be frightened when they went a step farther, and requested His Majesty to be good enough to let them know the amount of his *acquits au comptant*. These were all the sums which he drew from the treasury for his secret vices, gambling debts, and favourites, without any record being kept of the same.

This little request of the Parliament hid a big threat—one to drag ruthlessly out into the light of day all the malodorous secrets of the King's life, stories such as that of the pretty little girl, nine years of age, concealed in the apartments beyond the chapel at Versailles. The King had seen this child, Mademoiselle Tiercelin by name, in a crowd with her governess, and was struck with her beauty, which is said to have been angelic. Sartine, the most adroit and rascally of the Lieutenants de Police, found her and brought her to Louis, who

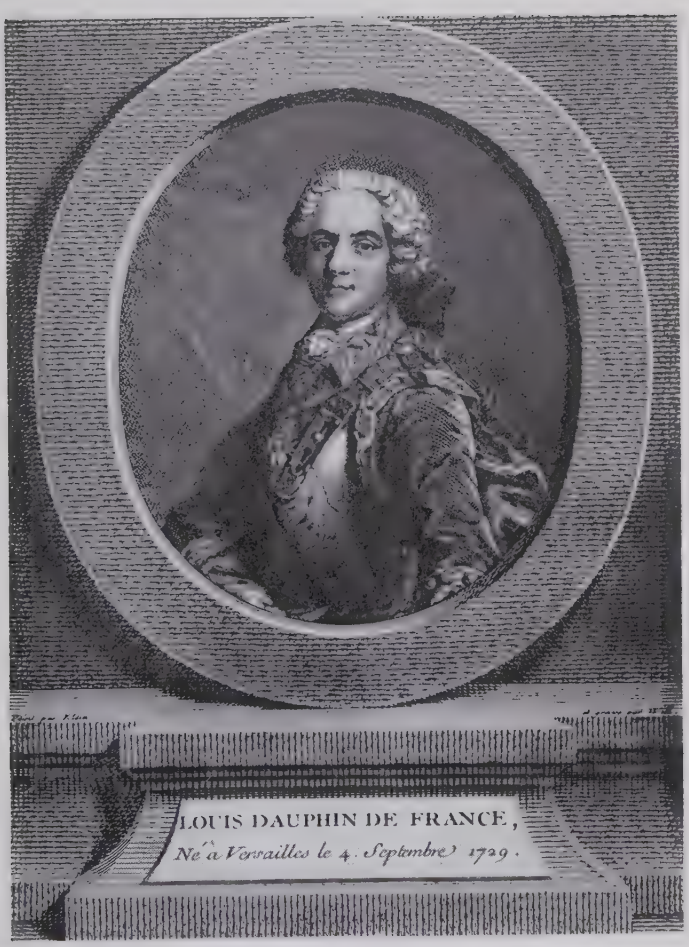
elevated the child himself in his *petits cabinets*, taking her her meals and teaching her her prayers! Before she had reached the age of fourteen the young Mademoiselle Tiercelin became the mother of a son. Louis then sent her away, with an income of 30,000 livres yearly. The young girl's ideas had become large, however; she expended not 30,000 but 100,000 livres yearly, and called upon the King several times to pay her debts, which he did.

These were the sort of unsavoury histories which the Parliament covertly threatened to make public when they demanded from the King his *acquits au comptant*.

All Versailles was in a state of terror. The public misery was intense; if the Parliament should make all these horrible stories known, the threat of May, 1750, "Let us burn Versailles!" might well become a reality. Choiseul, the witness of the King's predicament, now said, "Come, sire, let us abandon the Jesuits! that will occupy them."

Fifty Bishops were petitioning the King for the Jesuits, but in his fear Louis listened no longer to a word on their behalf. He allowed the Parliament to burn their books, to forbid them the confessional, and the education of children (October, 1761). In addition, Choiseul published, in an official journal, the *Gazette de France*, the judgment pronounced against Malagrida in Portugal.

The delighted Parliaments, now hand-in-glove with Choiseul, gave everything, registered everything demanded of them, at the same time as they trampled on the Jesuits and declared their statutes to be "abusive." In February, 1762, the Parliament of Rouen went



From an engraving after the picture by Klein.

THE DAUPHIN,
Eldest son of Louis XV. and father of Louis XVI.

further, ordering all the Jesuits to abandon their colleges and homes by July, also ordering the seizure of their goods and sale of their furniture. Rennes and Paris followed suit; especially did la Chalotais, the Procureur-Général of Rennes, publish fulminations against the Jesuits which were greatly admired in France.

The Royal Family endeavoured to induce the King to make one more stand, in the month of March, 1762; whereupon Choiseul said coldly to the King, "Sire! you must either suppress the Jesuits or suppress the Parliaments." This was tantamount to saying, "Face a revolution!"

The devout Dauphin and his backers now made a proposition to establish everywhere Provincial Estates, to be superior to the Parliaments. These would have been chiefly constituted of aristocratic elements, the friends and relations of the higher clergy. Choiseul understood their danger, and that, if they were to act seriously, their action would be in all probability such as to usurp the Royal prerogative. He did not hesitate to speak very plainly to the King, giving to Louis his ideas as to the Dauphin's proposals in the following words: "Of whatever form these Provincial Estates may be constituted, they will represent an assembly of men! What will the King do if they should unite? One cannot exile one's whole kingdom!"

Thus the *devout* King, who loved his Jesuits, who instructed the poor little girl Tiercelin in the tenets of religion, was obliged to let everything go by the board. His terror of the exposure of his expensive secret villainies was too great to enable him to raise a hand and strike a blow at the Parliaments—at all events, as yet, while the war still continued. Nor did Choiseul dare to touch the

Parliaments. One of the Philosophical gang himself, he had not hesitated to give a slap in the face, by Palissot's play, to those whose ideas he shared; but this violent body of men were a different force to deal with. These magistrates—these men of the robe—were accustomed freely to exercise their powers of burning, hanging, breaking on the wheel; in spite of repeated punishments and exilings they remained undismayed. It required immense strength to tackle them—more, so Choiseul recognised, than he possessed. And yet, in the state of abasement to which the Royal authority had been reduced, such power as remained in the State was concentrated in his hands and that of Madame de Pompadour—both the bosom friends of Austria—and the latter ardently anxious for revenge on the Jesuits.

All that Choiseul could hope for was that either the Parliaments should commit some action so foolish as to damage and weaken themselves, or that some extraordinary and unexpected incident should occur to shake them—crush their constantly increasing insolence. In the meanwhile, rather than attempt to "bell the cat," he preferred to keep on friendly terms with the men of the robe.

Thus, although Louis XV. felt that the Parliaments, as much as the Philosophers, were dealing him a mortal blow while striking at the Jesuits, he had no help to expect from the Duc de Choiseul, nor any comfort to expect either from Madame de Pompadour. At length, in December, 1764, an edict declared that the Society of Jesus no longer existed in France, that its members would merely be permitted to live privately in the King's dominions, while assuming the secular dress and conforming to the laws. Thus fell the Jesuits in France;

but Madame de Pompadour did not live to enjoy the crowning triumph of their final downfall, having died at Versailles a few months earlier.

Charles III., three years later, followed the example of France, but imitated Portugal in the roughness of his dismissal of the Jesuits from Spain. Finally in 1773, at the request of nearly all the crowned heads in Europe, the Pope, Clement XIV., declared the Society dissolved. The Jesuit General, Ricci, was then imprisoned in the Castle of Saint Angelo.

CHAPTER XVI

Voltaire Protector of the Protestants

1762—1765

THE question of Protestants or no Protestants, which had been such a burning one in the reign of Louis XIV., had, like that of Jesuits or no Jesuits, ceased to interest the greater part of France by the middle of the reign of his great-grandson.

Were there still any Protestants in France ? Had they not all been killed off or converted forcibly long ago ? The terrible Revocation of the Edict of Nantes dated from October 18th, 1685. The cruel authors of that barbarity, Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon, had for nearly half a century both been sleeping peacefully in their graves, and long before either of them died the very name Protestant had been stamped out in France, the reluctant remnants of the once flourishing cult having been forcibly transformed into *nouveaux convertis*.

Thus no Protestant remained but such as led a double life, attending Mass by day to hurry off to the woods and caverns by night, to listen to adventurous ministers of the Reformed faith who came from Lausanne to preach and get themselves hanged or broken on the wheel.

For the thing Protestant, if not the name, endured always, especially in the south, and the persecution went

steadily on as in the famous and fearful days of the dragonnades.

Even the dragonnades were renewed from time to time as the Provincial Parliaments of the south, in touch with the clergy, occasionally saw fit to strike terror to the heart of the stiff-necked race of the newly converted. When Cardinal Fleury had been at the helm of the Government he greatly increased the fines, and allowed even the village curés to employ military means of suppression. Long since his day, in 1751, the Intendant Saint-Priest delighted the hearts of the good clergy by insisting that not only should all suspected Protestants be rebaptised and remarried, but expressly compelled to partake of the Sacrament according to the rites of the Catholic faith.

The people at large—except in the south—cared nothing for what might happen. It was such an old story—the Protestants—the man who might happen to mention it was looked upon as a bore of the very worst description, he was asked to change the subject. People had no more pity left to give, and preferred to know nothing of the horrors which were still vaguely known to be going on, here and there, in the sacred name of religion.

Even the horrible sentences of the Parliaments of the south, their grand parades in red robes to the places of execution, or to witness a Protestant, suspected of suicide, dragged naked on a hurdle, were wearisome to hear about. Paris would have none of it, for the capital the whole Protestant question was in 1761 as dead as Julius Cæsar.

Far otherwise was it in the *midi* of France! At Toulouse and Montpellier a hundred thousand excited

men, women, and children would still delightedly assemble on some saint's day or fête to see the glad sight of a Protestant being broken on the wheel—and if more than one, say a whole family, so much the better.

The very appearance of a minister of the Reformed Church among these excitable southern populations was sufficient to drive them into a frenzy of fury. Woe betide him should he be caught! And yet some did escape capture for many years. The minister Rabaut, for instance, for half a century wandered about in Languedoc, notably in the neighbourhood of Nîmes, without the infuriated authorities of Church or State being able to get him into their grip.

Not so fortunate was a young minister named Rochette. Being seized at Caussade on September 14th, 1761, he made no denial of his faith. Three young gentlemen, glass manufacturers, endeavoured to rescue the pastor from the hands of a furious mob, whereupon the Catholic population displayed the greatest fury and violence—all armed themselves with pitchforks, the butchers came with their bulldogs, the bells of the churches sounded the tocsin. Rochette and his would-be preservers were dragged off to Toulouse, the people demanding to witness their instant torture and execution. They were able to enjoy that pleasure a few months later, when the general joy and triumph were such as if a great victory had been won.

In the same year as the death of Rochette, in the month of October, 1762, took place another tragic event, to give the excited people something to howl over at the time, and to make the name of the so-called infidel Voltaire glorious later, as the saviour of the Protestants of France.

Upon October 13th but one cry was to be heard in the streets of Toulouse: "A Protestant family has strangled its son!" Such was the infamous and lying accusation hurled, with all the envenomed spite of religious hatred, at the innocent and respectable family of Calas. A worthy merchant named Calas, who had for forty years had a good business in Toulouse, had married a lady of noble birth, by whom he had a family, of whom the elder members were grown up. One of the younger children was a boy named Louis, seven years of age. A servant in the house, a Catholic, was much devoted to this boy, and sought to save his soul by secretly taking him with her to the Mass, and also to the house of a Catholic wig-maker and hair-dresser.

One day the wig-maker's wife hid little Louis in her house, and he refused to return as there was a religious little boy there of his own age, his great friend. According to the law enacted at the time of the Revocation, any child of seven could declare himself a Catholic. This Louis did, to the delight of the Archbishop, since by the law he could also declare war upon and denounce his parents.

This, being properly schooled, is what Louis did, and his father was summoned before the Archbishop. Calas was ordered to pay 600 francs for the debts of Louis, 400 francs to apprentice the boy to a Catholic, and 100 francs a year in addition. As if this were not sufficient, the Archbishop next decreed that M. Calas should pay up for the establishment in life of the little Louis, to the tune of 300 francs in cash and 10,000 francs worth of merchandise.

Nor was this all. The wretched little boy was

secretly instructed to write a letter to the Intendant of the Province demanding that his two sisters, older than himself, and his little brother, Donat by name, should be torn from their home and educated as Catholics.

The eldest and grown-up son of M. Calas was named Marc Antoine. He saw his little brother Louis drop this letter from his pocket, read it, and scolded the child in bitter terms. Marc Antoine, although a rigid Protestant, was a young man of irregular habits. He was already a bachelor at law, but in order to practise at the bar a licence was necessary, and this he could not obtain without demanding a certificate of Catholicity. This certificate he could not bring himself to ask for, and, in despair at finding his career closed to him, took to haunting the *cabaret* and drinking too much.

Owing to his irregular life his father refused to associate his son with himself in his business, whereupon Marc Antoine talked of going to Geneva, having himself ordained, and returning to hang himself. He had a friend named Lavaysse, a brilliant young fellow, also son of a Protestant, but who had been brought up by the Jesuits. Fortune seemed to smile upon this young man, who had entered the navy, wore a sword, was a student of mathematics and navigation, and about to become a master-pilot when a rich uncle summoned him to a fine plantation in Saint-Domingo.

Lavaysse came on October 13th, 1762, to see the Calas family and say good-bye. He stopped to supper and was very gay. The sight of his merriment, and of a prosperity denied to himself, saddened the unhappy Marc Antoine. He sat glumly drinking, but not speaking, and presently slipped from the table,

went downstairs, took off and folded up his coat and waistcoat—and hanged himself.

In their despair the unhappy Calas family already saw the unfortunate young man's naked body being dragged on the hurdle as a suicide. A sentence of that kind carried a stigma with it which would never leave a family. It would be a reproach to his brothers and sisters fifty years later, "Your brother was dragged naked on the hurdle!"

Accordingly, when the neighbours rushed in, Calas committed the error of saying, "No, he did not kill himself."

"Then you killed him!—you murdered your own son!" was the reply.

It was a Sunday evening, and the streets of Toulouse were full of people. Carrying the corpse of Marc Antoine in front, the neighbours dragged the whole family of Calas, and Lavaysse also, through the crowds, yelling, "Protestants who have strangled their son!"

According to the law of the Middle Ages, which still prevailed in Toulouse, the magistrate requested the clergy to fulminate from the pulpit what was termed a *monitoire*, calling upon all who knew anything to come and give truthful evidence.

For five Sundays in succession, while the unhappy Calas family was imprisoned, all the curés in Toulouse pronounced this *monitoire*. But, not content with calling for witnesses, these bigoted priests told them what they were to give as testimony. That is to say, they preached to the people a fable which they had concocted as follows:

That Marc Antoine had declared his intention of becoming a Catholic. That a council had been held

in a certain house by which Marc Antoine had been condemned to die. Further, a full and particular account was given from the pulpits of the details of the barbarous death of the young man, and the piteous cries to which he had given vent while being done to death by his parents.

In continuation of this fable, the better to work up the populace against a Protestant family which had murdered their Catholic son, a magnificent sepulchral service and fête was accorded to Marc Antoine. The service took place in November in the church of the white penitents; but all the churches fought for the honour, and the white, blue, black, and grey brotherhoods all carried banners—that is to say, all of the different trades of the town which followed one sect or another. In a church all draped with white, upon a lofty black bier, was displayed a skeleton, which the ignorant people imagined to be the remains of Marc Antoine, and vengeance was demanded for this skeleton, which held a palm branch in its bony fingers. The fury of the people, notably that of the women, was easily worked up against the Protestants by these disgusting manœuvres of the priests of Toulouse. It seemed not improbable that this fury would terminate in a general massacre, especially as the priests advanced the two following propositions:

First, "It is certain that if, in spite of all the prosecutions, the Protestants insist upon remaining Protestant, there is a reason for it. That reason is that they have a secret tribunal which condemns to death all who wish to become converted. Marc Antoine Calas was condemned and murdered for that reason."

Second, "It is the more true because Calvin himself expressly ordered the slaying of the indocile son."

The women carried the thesis of the curés still further, saying, "This tribunal has an ordained sacrificer of children, who carries a sword. The young pilot, Lavaysse, wore a sword, therefore he is the sacrificer. For to strangle a man one must have a sword!"

With reference to this, Voltaire gave vent to the following biting commentary, "A judgment all the more Christian in that it was incapable of proof!" What proof, indeed, is required in a religion which is founded upon love and faith alone? Tertullian and Saint Augustine say, "The more the thing seems illogical, crazy, absurd, the more cause there is for faith, for the belief of love." Such was the *affaire Calas*, a vigorous demonstration of faith on the part of the city of Toulouse.

The *capitouls*, or aldermen of the city, demonstrated their own faith, at all events, in the testimony of all sorts of rascally women who came to give witness against the Calas, pouring out like water the foolish contents of their too imaginative brain. Even a street-walker, a young woman who had recently been publicly flogged by the executioner, was accepted by these magistrates as a reliable witness. They found all the family guilty. An appeal to the Parliament of Toulouse found a majority against the old man Calas, but against him alone. At the risk of being torn to pieces, a brave lawyer named Sudre had ventured to state the whole case for Calas with the greatest lucidity before the Parliament; but that body was all the more biassed against the Protestants, owing to the fact being made known that the old minister Rabaut was in the neighbourhood, and

had publicly declared and written that Protestants did not teach the murder of children. Rabaut's interference settled the matter.

When Calas, who was sixty-four years of age, was broken upon the wheel at Toulouse, the whole city assembled, hoping that in his death agonies he would implicate some members of his family. The Alderman David had shown himself from the first the bitterest enemy of this old man, accused of having strangled, or hanged, a young and strong man over twenty-four years old. This old man's noble wife and daughters were still detained in prison, and David thirsted for their blood. After Calas's back was broken, as he hung upon the wheel, he exclaimed, "I am innocent, and I pray God to pardon my judges." He remained thus in agony for two hours, while David vainly endeavoured to make him accuse those dear to him. At the last moment the Alderman sprung to his side, pointing to the faggots which were to burn his body.

"Confess! miserable wretch; in a few minutes you will be nothing but ashes!"

Calas turned his head away from this inhuman monster, and died. His firmness had saved his family and Lavaysse.

When this latter was released from prison, the women instead of—as his family feared they would—tearing him to pieces, went crazy over him. For their hearts were now softened. "What a handsome young man! What a pretty fellow! He commit a murder? Never!" And they surrounded young Lavaysse, blessed him, kissed him. As we have already had occasion to remark, a strange race these French! So strange, indeed, that we shall soon see the people of Paris, of all France, which but

lately refused to hear the word Protestant mentioned, filled with pity for the Calas, for the Protestants !

At the same time the Parliament of Toulouse, which had by its inhuman act of condemnation of Calas declared its majesty, while acting in unison with the Church, had by that very act struck a blow, not at itself alone, but at all the Parliaments in France, of which some at this very time were so actively waging war against the Jesuits. To bring about this change from indifference to pity, to give a direction to the blow at the Parliaments, required that there should be a guiding hand. This guiding hand was to be found in Geneva, where Voltaire was living in luxury—but practically an outcast from France—at his beautiful country seat called Les Délices. Here he lived in great style, writing plays of which his niece, Madame Denis, played the heroine. He also had an enormous mansion at Lausanne, with fifteen windows giving on the lake, Savoy, and the Alps. Before long he was permitted to establish himself in France, where he bought, in his niece's name, the seigniory of Ferney, near the Swiss border, so as to be able to decamp at any time should France prove too hot for him.

A witness of Calas's execution related its circumstances to Voltaire ; when we are told the writer of the *Henriade*, that epic of humanity, bounded with indignation. Little Donat Calas was in Geneva, he was brought to the poet and questioned ; and then Voltaire wrote to Madame Calas and asked her if she could affirm, " in the name of God," that her husband had been innocent.

When he received her reply, the poet set to work with all his energies to rehabilitate the dead man and his family, to obtain the reversal of the Parliamentary judgment which had been pronounced against Calas.

This was an enterprise more dangerous than that of Don Quixote tilting at a windmill—it involved the disgrace of the Parliament of Toulouse, the compelling of that arrogant body to eat its own words. It was at once an attack, moreover, on the Parliament of Toulouse and the Catholic clergy as a body. The enterprise seemed, indeed, at such an epoch, to be that of a madman.

Nevertheless, without a proof, without a document—the documents being in the possession of the Toulouse Parliament—Voltaire opened the campaign by writing to Saint-Florentin, Duc de la Vrillière, perhaps the hardest-hearted man in France, the Minister of the *lettres de cachet*, who loved his prisoners so dearly that it went sadly to his heart ever to set one at liberty.

Voltaire cunningly took the line of pretending to imagine that a sensible man like la Vrillière must be as shocked as himself at such a miscarriage of justice as had occurred in the Calas case. He sent many people to the Minister of Prisons, who wriggled under the piercing glance of the distant poet and satirist, as he replied to them, "What can I do in the matter? Surely it is solely an affair of the justiciary."

La Vrillière soon began to feel the eye of all France, indeed of all Europe, upon him. No sooner was Voltaire installed at Ferney than he gave shelter, food, and support to Madame Calas and her family, while by his endless writings stirring up public opinion in their favour everywhere. In the salons of Paris the *affaire Calas* soon became the sole topic of conversation; the literary ladies of the day, the partisans of progress, followed the Philosopher from philosophy to philanthropy. D'Alembert put the affair before the woman whom he loved so dearly, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who had broken away from

the evil-tongued Madame du Deffand, of whose brother she was the illegitimate daughter, and started a salon of her own. It was the resort of all the most brilliant society in Paris. The lively writer Marmontel—who wrote tragedies for Mademoiselle Clairon and *Contes Moraux*, not particularly celebrated for their morality—the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, and the fastidious Madame de Geoffrin were members of this circle. This latter-named lady was also celebrated for a salon of her own.

While showering the warmth of her affections upon Mora, a Spanish nobleman, and Colonel Guibert, the friend of Frederick the Great, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, it is said, refused to accord to d'Alembert, with whom she lived for so long, any but fraternal affection; she, however, was only too ready to assist this friend of Voltaire in the matter of the Calas family. The illegitimate daughter of the Comtesse d'Albon was more celebrated for her amiability and intellectual qualities than, like Madame de Geoffrin, for literary tastes. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse has, however, been described as "a volcano of passion."

She and her coterie constituted a tremendous force, especially owing to her union with Madame de Geoffrin, who allowed her friend 3,000 livres yearly, and backed her up against her ancient persecutor, the spiteful-tongued du Deffand.

Madame de Geoffrin was the daughter of a *valet de chambre* married to a rich glass manufacturer. She had little education, and was introduced into society by the abominable Madame de Tencin. With the sole exception of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, none but men were admitted to the literary salon that she formed. These

included Marmontel, Grimm, and Diderot, as well as artists and connoisseurs of note.

Through the agency of all these people Voltaire was the means of organising an attack upon the Parliaments and their system. This pleased Choiseul very well, but he merely acted in an underhand way, by playing a trick upon la Vrillière, the agent of the principal Parliament, that of Paris. There was in the galleys at Toulon a famous young convict named Fabre. This young saint had by stealth taken his father's place in the galleys, and many appeals had been made in vain to la Vrillière to restore him to liberty. In 1762 Choiseul himself took over the duties of Minister of the Marine, when, to the terrible distress of the Minister of the Prisons, he tore his Fabre from him and gave him his freedom.

The Parliament of Paris were not at first inclined to assist in reversing the judgment of Toulouse. The magistrates were unwilling to allow the writings of Voltaire on the subject of Calas to circulate in France. There was, however, a most intrepid *conseiller*, a bandy-legged cripple who had himself, in his time, tasted the horrors of a dungeon. This was the Abbé de Chauvelin, a noted orator. With fiery and convincing eloquence he espoused the cause of Voltaire, while striking also at the Jesuits. He carried the day; Voltaire's pamphlets flooded Paris. At the same time, in a spirit of revenge against all philosophers, the Parliament of Paris endeavoured to arrest Rousseau, for his *Emile*. Rousseau escaped; but *Emile* was suppressed.

Voltaire now insisted that Madame Calas should proceed to Paris in person. She feared to do so, lest her daughters, who were now detained in a convent,

should be ill-treated. She, however, came, and only just in time; the Parliament of Toulouse was applying to la Vrillière to have her rearrested.

In Paris every one was interested in Madame Calas. "What!" they said, "is that noble-looking lady only a merchant's wife? Is that interesting person in deep mourning a Protestant?" The old hatred against the Protestants was already forgotten.

It is not to be imagined that la Vrillière and the party of *dêvots* behind him were going to allow Voltaire to have it all his own way! The literary Fréron, the enemy of Voltaire, was employed. He published in a journal what purported to be a translation from the English of an article written by the sage of Ferney, full of violent abuse of the King. It was a clumsy device; Voltaire had no difficulty in tearing its authors to pieces. He had been warned by Choiseul, and was ready with floods of sarcasm to mock at and brand the forgers. It was patent at once to the meanest intelligence that, at a time when he had such need of the King, Voltaire could never have been the author of the article.

The Parliament of Toulouse now endeavoured to make another Calas, saying, "Yes, it is true!—the Protestants do murder their children!" The sapient magistrates condemned to death a man named Sirven and his family upon the charge of having drowned his young daughter in a well. A little girl, the only witness, who declared that she had seen the crime committed, afterwards confessed that she had been bribed with sweetmeats to make the statement. The facts were that the little girl Sirven had been torn from her home and placed in a nunnery by the Bishop of Castres. The nuns treated her so cruelly that the poor child lost her senses.

She was sent home, and, in her madness, jumped down the well.

In the middle of the winter snows Sirven and his family fled across the mountains of the Cévennes. One of the daughters gave birth to a child in the middle of the glaciers, in spite of which all escaped, to fling themselves eventually at the feet of Voltaire, at Ferney in the province of Gex. Voltaire gave them a shelter, and brought them to the notice of a crowd of *grands seigneurs* who came to visit him. He had already received and consoled Fabre—who owed his release by the Duc de Choiseul to Voltaire's instigations. At length—while England and Russia were raising subscriptions for the Calas family—the cause of humanity triumphed in France. The Grand Council succeeded in obtaining all the documents from the Parliament of Toulouse, and the case was admitted for pleading to the Bureau of Cassation. Cassation was pronounced on March 8th, 1763, and Madame Calas and her two daughters were received in triumph at Versailles on the following day, which was a Sunday. Choiseul sent them there to see the glories of the Palace, and witness the passing of the King on his way to the Mass.

The three simple women, clad in black, with high, white *cornettes* upon the head, were in the grand gallery when the Royal *cortège* approached. All knew whom they were; but, in order that the King might not be obliged to look their way, one of the courtiers created a diversion by pretending to slip and falling down. The good Queen Marie Lesczynska—friend of the Jesuits all her life though she was—deigned, however, to see the three ladies Calas. She called them to her, and spoke to them kindly.

Another two years were necessary before the judgment which had declared Calas guilty was quashed. The Parliament of Toulouse, however, refused to efface the sentence from its registers, and, from fear that they might hang him, the *huissier* who took them the order to do so had to be very highly paid. A small sum of money was accorded to Madame Calas in lieu of her prosecuting her judges pecuniarily; but for a while the Court behaved in a vacillating manner, in not allowing her to continue to use the escutcheon or trade mark of the family. The prohibition was, however, withdrawn.

Voltaire had at length won a complete victory, and saved the Protestant cause in France! From that year, 1765, those of the Reformed Faith were no longer molested. Satisfied with what he had done, this man, who has falsely been called Atheist, considered it wise not to attempt to push any further the question of effacing the sentence from the registers. Having gained the substance, he snapped his fingers at the shadow.

CHAPTER XVII

Peace, and the Death of Pompadour

1763—1764

A YEAR after General Wolfe conquered the Marquis de Montcalm before Quebec the whole of Canada had fallen into British hands. Three days after Wolfe's victory on the plains of Abraham, Quebec was occupied by the English troops. This occupation took place on September 16th, 1759, and the Duc de Lévis made a determined effort to recapture the place in the following spring. When, at the end of April, 1760, Lévis appeared before Quebec—upon the very ground formerly occupied by Wolfe—General Murray at once issued from the city and engaged the French. After a long and desperate hand-to-hand struggle Murray was compelled to fall back into Quebec, a number of his men whom he had left outside being butchered and scalped by the Indian allies of the Duc de Lévis. This General now in turn laid siege to the city of the St. Lawrence; but, two British men-of-war appearing in the river on May 9th, the French retreated during the night of the 16th of that month. They were followed to Montreal by Murray, Amherst, and Haviland, when on September 8th, 1760, the Governor of Canada, M. de Vaudreuil, surrendered that city and also the whole of Canada without making any defence.

This incompetent and arrogant Governor had, during the lifetime of the gallant Montcalm, utterly failed to back him up, always disagreeing with his plans, and refusing to give him proper assistance. The Duc de Lévis refused at first to yield, and retired to the beautiful island of Sainte-Hélène in the mighty St. Lawrence below Quebec. There he entrenched himself until he received the Governor's express commands to lay down his arms. Thus Canada became British; Florida also was abandoned to the English. It had belonged to Spain, but France gave part of Louisiana in exchange to Charles III.

In India, in January, 1761, France lost her last stronghold, Pondicherry. The Bourbon lilies, therefore, ceased to float over the broad plains of Hindustan. At the same time the British flag was fluttering in the breeze in France itself, over Belle-Isle, conquered and occupied in April.

After the resignation of Pitt events soon proved how justified he had been in demanding war to be declared against Spain as soon as ever he heard of the Family Compact. That country had soon foolishly joined France, obtaining by so doing a rapid succession of severe blows for sole reward. She was beaten by Portugal; her Philippine Islands were seized and ransomed; Havana and the whole of Cuba were also taken by the British; millions of money and nearly all the Spanish ships became the prey of England, while France never was able to lift a little finger to help her Bourbon cousins.

Choiseul, constantly compelled to give all the men of France for the war to help Austria, was at last obliged to cry out to Maria Theresa, "We can do no more!" A million men had perished in Europe or on the seas;

the British merchant shipping had suffered considerably from the depredations of the French corsairs from Dunkirk, but the French navy was almost destroyed.

Being thus humiliated, beaten, and disarmed, there remained nothing for France but to sue humbly for a separate peace with England. In Lord Bute was found a different-spirited man to deal with than Pitt, who was now insisting upon the demolition of Dunkirk.

"England has the empire of the seas; I have no fear of Dunkirk, but the prejudice exists. In the destruction of Dunkirk the people will see an eternal monument of the yoke imposed upon France." So spoke the Great Commoner!

Lord Bute was so anxious, however, to end the war that he contented himself in Europe with the recovery of Minorca, while he restored Martinique to France, and Cuba and the Philippines to Spain. But England gained her point concerning the demolition of the walls of Dunkirk, and also the cession of all French rights in India. In America, by the same Treaty of Paris of February, 1763, was ceded Canada, Nova Scotia, and Louisiana, as far as the Mississippi, in addition to Florida.

A splendid inheritance was that of Britain, therefore, in both east and west. The whole of North America had now become British, and would have remained so for ever had it not been for the obstinate and pig-headed folly of George III. a few years later, which drove the colonists to rebellion and secession from the Mother Country.

When the Seven Years' War terminated thus for France, fêtes were organised in Paris in celebration of the peace. These only caused general irritation, while

the erection of a triumphal statue to Louis XV. was viewed with disgust, as a comic event only worthy of sarcasm. The pedestal of the statue was soon decorated with numerous biting libels concerning the King and his glory!

After England had withdrawn her support from the King of Prussia, and while France and England were already talking about a separate peace, Frederick and Austria were left fighting it out alone. Frederick, savage with despair, broke into Silesia and won a brilliant victory over the Austrians at Bückersdorf. He forced Maria Theresa to give way and to ask for peace. When this treaty was signed at Hubertsburg, Frederick remained triumphantly in possession of Silesia, while Maria Theresa was no better off than when she first started the unrighteous combat, in which she had involved all Europe in the futile hopes of her own aggrandisement. She still, however, for years to come, continued to receive from France the back balance of unpaid subsidies, to the amount of 34,000,000 livres. For while in France all was bankruptcy, and the *rentiers* received only half the interest of the *rentes*, Choiseul continued to find the money to pay to his beloved Austria.

After eight years of absence and warfare Frederick re-entered his capital of Berlin in triumph. The city had been more than once plundered, Cossacks and Croats had massacred men, women, and children, and the population of Prussia had been diminished by one-tenth. Frederick, however, owed no money, and for the twenty-four remaining years of his reign remained armed at all points. During this quarter of a century the man who had grown so strong as to be able single-handed to fight all Europe devoted his energies to the

restoration of his country and its preservation. With a view to enlarging his kingdom he, before long, proceeded to negotiate the partition of Poland with his old enemies Russia and Austria. That monster of unbridled lust, Catharine II., having murdered her husband, Peter III., in 1762, was again turning her eyes towards Prussia when Frederick threw a sop to both her and Maria Theresa by dividing Poland with them in 1772.

In France, with the end of the war recommenced the revolutionary action of the Parliaments, owing to the terrible condition of affairs caused by the taxation for the war. The Parliaments of Rouen, Grenoble, and Besançon sought to bring to justice the Governors of their provinces; that of Toulouse went further, and endeavoured to arrest the Duc de Fitz-James, their Governor, an illegitimate descendant of James II. of England. In Paris the King proceeded once more to overawe the Parliament in a Bed of Justice; in spite of which the young and courageous President, Malesherbes, openly insisted upon the general assembly in France of the Estates-General—to control the King.

A revolution similar to that of 1789 seemed to be on the point of breaking out in France. It all depended upon whether or no the separate Parliaments should unite. If Paris supported Toulouse in the matter of the arrest and trial of Fitz-James, a Duc and peer of the realm, that coalition would be assured. None had more to fear from it than the Duc de Choiseul. In the general misery he had become rich, the original 6,000 livres yearly with which he had brought his sister the Duchesse de Grammont to Paris had now become 1,000,000 yearly. He had just bought for himself Chanteloup, an enormous territory in Alsace, when, to tame the ferocious parlia-

mentary bulldog, he descended to subtle flattery, made the King flatter also.

Choiseul selected a Minister of Finance from the midst of the turbulent, unruly crowd, in the person of Laverdy, a very popular and esteemed magistrate, at the same time as he caused the King humbly to ask the advice of the Parliament, demanding its members kindly to give him the benefit of their assistance in the matter of the assessment.

The bulldog became at once calm and wagged his tail. By a large majority the Parliament of Paris disowned that of Toulouse, declaring that it had no right to attempt to judge a peer of France, even if he had been guilty of violently oppressing and imprisoning its members. The Parliaments remained disunited and disarmed, while Choiseul gained seven years of reign by this decision, the result of his subtle flattery.

There is no doubt that the Duc de Choiseul was a very clever and unscrupulous man, one who understood well how to turn every influence, every event, to his own advantage. He had begun by paying more than ordinary court to the Marquise de Pompadour, of which immoral woman—no matter what her interested waiting-woman du Hausset may say to the contrary—he appears, like the Abbé de Bernis, to have been the successful lover. Even Madame du Hausset only denies the actual fact in a very half-hearted manner, while owning that Madame de Pompadour was "very fond of" him. They were a pair of rascals, and together they exploited the King—while terrorising him—for their own advantage. The terrorism of Louis by Choiseul, aided by his sister de Grammont and cousin the Duc de Praslin, continued after Madame de Pompadour died on April 15th, 1764. She declared

in her dying moments to the Duc de Richelieu that she was poisoned by Choiseul and Madame de Grammont, in order that the latter might usurp her position as the official King's mistress. Pompadour said that, although she knew her health was but precarious, she was convinced that her end had been assisted. She, however, wished no fuss made about the matter, only to let Richelieu know in order that he might be able to protect the King by warning him of what had happened.

Madame de Grammont was eleven or twelve years younger than Madame de Pompadour, and, according to Richelieu, she had already attempted to *brusquer la chose* in a certain *souper à quatre* which the King had not dared to refuse—nor Pompadour either, although she was already on bad terms with the two Stainvilles. At the end of the supper, the King being overcome with wine, Choiseul played the gallant with the Marquise, while his intrepid sister would appear to have taken possession of the King in spite of Madame de Pompadour. On the following morning the Marquise put the King to shame, asking him if he were not master, and why he submitted to the domination of the Choiseuls. She insisted that he would be wiser to recall Bernis from his exile at Soissons. The King sent for Bernis and saw him, and had actually signed the exile of Choiseul when he hesitated. For Choiseul was on good terms with the Parliaments, and Damiens, who had attempted Louis' life, had been a hanger-on of the Parliamentary *conseiliers*, whom he had served.

Meanwhile Madame de Pompadour was seized with acute pains, which resulted in her death, after having confided everything to the Duc de Richelieu, when many people believed in the poison theory. Madame de

Grammont was so furious against her dead rival, who had conquered her in dying by leaving this dagger-thrust behind her, that she went to the church of the Capucines, disguised in a cloak, on purpose to spurn with her foot the coffin containing Pompadour's remains. Three other Kings' mistresses, Diane de Poitiers, Gabrielle d'Estrées, and Madame de Maintenon, had, like her, died upon April 15th—"*la charmante* Gabrielle," mistress of Henry of Navarre, poisoned by Zamet the Moor, that gallant King's boon companion.

When the Marquise de Pompadour died, she left great riches behind her, the larger portion of which was inherited by her brother the Marquis de Marigny, both of her daughters by her husband, M. Lenormand d'Étioles, having died young. She was possessed of a yearly income of a million and a half of livres, and had received or purchased in addition the territories of La Celle, Crécy, Marigny, and St. Remy, the Châteaux of Aulnay, Brimborion, and Bellevue, and owned also splendid establishments at Paris, Versailles, Fontainebleau, and Compiègne. That she had considerable talents, in spite of her detractors, is evident, for, in addition to being possessed of theatrical skill, she both painted and engraved with unusual ability. She was forty-two at the time of her death.

When such were the wages of vice, it is not to be marvelled at that such a notoriously vicious woman as the Duchesse de Grammont should have sought to supplant her friend, with whom for long she was upon such intimate terms. That Madame de Pompadour assisted in the terrorising of the King is evident from the letters, disclosing the existence of the secret agents of Louis, published by M. Boutaric in 1866. The Choiseuls

knew only too well of these agents, and were anxious to see their letters, which Louis always kept locked up in a secretaire of which he kept the key on his person. One morning the King found all his papers had been disturbed and were mixed up. He trembled, perceiving that all his most intimate secrets, which he was at such pains to conceal from Choiseul, were discovered. Madame de Pompadour, instigated by the Duc and his sister, had stolen the key from his pocket, and together the trio of accomplices had had the time to go through all the documents in the desk.

Another writer before Boutaric, M. Gaillardet, published, in 1834, various pieces relative to the secret agents of the King—agents who, when discovered by Choiseul, were persecuted by the powerful Minister with the greatest violence, without the slightest regard for the Monarch by whom they were employed in self-protection against his tyrants.

When Louis XVI. succeeded his grandfather he in turn made use of some of these agents, whom he found very sure against the Austrian cabal by which he was so constantly threatened. Louis XVI. would never employ Choiseul, being convinced from his childhood that he was the poisoner of his father, the Dauphin. That he mortified the Dauphin and crushed him with impertinence, at the same time as he held the King in a condition of terror under his thumb, there seems to have been no doubt. That he attempted to cause the murder, by poison or other means, of the King's secret agent—the man-woman—d'Eon, is also known. But there is no evidence that he poisoned either the Dauphin or Dauphine.

CHAPTER XVIII

Choiseul and his Wife

1758—1770

ALTHOUGH the Duc de Choiseul kept Louis XV. in a state of subjection, by terrorising him, his real character was not violent. He was a *petit maître*, with charming manners in society, light in character with the fair sex, as were all the men of his time. Dry he was at times, and haughty; one of the school of *méchants*, his discretion was not to be relied on where a woman's honour was concerned. Should his pride be injured by a woman, he did not hesitate to be cruel. Choiseul was not difficult to deal with in matters of State affairs, being entirely different to the older d'Argenson—the Minister of Police of Louis XIV. and the Regent—who made a point of always receiving even the greatest personages at first with frowning aspect and knitted brows. It is, therefore, evident that he would never have treated the King with such insolence had it not been for the two evil counsellors behind him. These were the Duc de Praslin (a Stainville, his cousin) and his sister. De Praslin, a few years older than Choiseul, practically shared his triple Ministry—their offices were connected. His was a hard, insistent nature, heavy and sour, and his weight told upon the lighter character of his cousin. As for the ex-*chanoinesse*,

Madame de Grammont, although her behaviour showed her to be free from none of the frailties of her sex, she was masculine by nature, impulsive, impetuous, and rude. While Pompadour was working with this trio, the King was no match for them, for all his secret agents! And if the Monarch himself was but as a child in their hands, what chance had the Dauphin?

When the heir to the throne presented to his father a memorial, drawn up by a Jesuit, demonstrating the fact that Choiseul was playing into the hands of the Parliaments by sacrificing the Jesuits to them, Madame de Pompadour contrived that this memorial should find its way into Choiseul's hands. The Minister got upon the high horse with the King, insisting upon giving in his resignation, when Louis, in fear, betrayed his son.

Weeping bitterly, like a poltroon, the King only obtained his Minister's forgiveness by declaring that "the Dauphin had lied"! This incident will be found recorded in Choiseul's Memoirs. He at once proceeded to the Dauphin, and addressed that Prince in the following insolent manner: "Monsieur, I may have the misfortune to become your subject, but I will never be your servant." It was simply as the agent of the Austrian cabal that a man who could treat the King and his son in this arbitrary fashion was able to continue at the head of affairs for a dozen years. As subsidiary to the Austrian influence we must add the Bourbon influence gained by his Spanish Compact. The two influences went together, since Choiseul arranged the marriage of Isabelle, the daughter of Don Philip of Parma and the Infanta, to Joseph, the future Emperor. His last political action of any importance was when he provided the son of the Dauphin with Marie Antoinette, the Austrian wife who, as is now

From a mezzotint after the picture by Vanloo.

DUC DU CHOISEUL.

acknowledged, proved a veritable scourge for France. The King believed Choiseul capable of anything, even poisoning; and, therefore, because he wished to live, still retained him after the Dauphin died, at the end of the year 1765.

A remarkable circumstance in connection with this intriguing Lorrainer was his luck. He very ably helped his luck, certainly, but it existed, to assist the way in which he contrived to turn every incident of importance to his own advantage. The Government in France always had the credit of any striking circumstance of good or evil. Thus, when the rottenness of the Jesuits had arrived at a pitch that they could be flung out, the glory of their downfall fell upon Choiseul—and the Parliament was his. Again, when Voltaire made the outcry about the unfortunate Calas, when the gates were at last thrown down of the hell which imprisoned the miserable Protestants, the glory of the action redounded to the credit of the Minister. He gained forthwith the solid support of those very Philosophers whom he had caused to be so ignominiously handled by Palissot in his play.

Once more, when the *Économistes* preached an agricultural revolution, the free circulation of wheat and its export without duties, the improvements which resulted, to the advantage of the great proprietors, were attributed to Choiseul. Thus the *Économistes*, like the Parliament and the Philosophers, rallied to the standard of this exceedingly lucky Minister.

The manner in which he understood how to bamboozle public opinion would have been amusing if it had not resulted in actual tragedy. When Canada was lost at the time of the peace of 1763, Choiseul exclaimed,

"Oh, that's nothing! only the loss of a few miserable acres of snow! We can do far better than that." And he commenced to found a colony in equatorial regions, in the deadly island of Cayenne, in French Guiana. Some poor wretches, about twelve thousand souls in all, without proper provisions or preparations, were flung there—to die. This mattered nothing, the required effect of the starting of a new colony was produced.

In the salons of the period we find that the man who snapped his fingers at the King condescended to become a courtier. He was indefatigable in his attendance at that of the spiteful, half-blind Madame du Deffand, where he found a mixed society, such as, the Queen's partisan, the President Hénault, side by side with the Fériols and d'Argentals, of the party of Voltaire. That wicked woman, Queen of the *méchantes*, Madame de Luxembourg, was there to be seen gaily chatting with the Maréchale de Mirepoix, the *petit chat* of Madame de Pompadour. With its old tyrant at its head, scolding and backbiting, the salon of this old hag, formerly the unreliable friend of the Marquise de Prie, was the well-known home of scandal. It was not without reason that it was feared throughout France as the breeding-place of blistering slanders. Choiseul allowed the old harpy to abuse and scold him to her heart's content; he felt the necessity of remaining *au mieux* with the amiable hostess of such a polyglot assembly of sharp-tongued men and women.

While thus keeping the friendship of all classes and conditions of men, there was one person whose society the Duc de Choiseul never thought it worth while to cultivate. This was his charming young wife, a delicious and delicate person, and a saint among sinners. Madame

de Choiseul always seemed to retain the age of twelve, at which she was married. Modest and resigned, she was reticent and quiet. There were not, however, wanting those who saw in her the excellent qualities and attractions which Choiseul himself overlooked. The pretty and *mignonne* little lady had a court of admirers, of whom one, Walpole, has expressed himself in the following terms: "Oh! she is the most delightful, the most honest little creature who ever sprung from an enchanted egg. All love her, except her husband, who prefers his sister, who is detested."

This little lady was virtuous to a degree; it is not, however, to be imagined that her innocent and youthful charms were overlooked by an ogre, a minotaur like Louis XV. Nor, when Choiseul was perfectly willing, indeed plotted, to surrender to the King the sister whom he openly adored, have we any reason to imagine that he would not willingly himself have conducted his wife to Louis' apartments had she been inclined to listen to the King's proposals. The Duchesse de Choiseul, however, retained her virtue, and with it the King's respect. When the sister was by force throwing herself into his arms, he could hardly refuse his admiration to the neglected wife, who refused to be unfaithful to a careless husband. Accordingly, in the King's letter of dismissal, when eventually exiling Choiseul from the Court on Christmas Eve, 1770, we find the following words: "I should have sent you much further off but for the particular regard I have for Madame de Choiseul, in whose health I feel great interest."

The Duc was then allowed to retire to his great estate of Chanteloup in Alsace, where, according to Guizot, "he displayed a magnificence which ended by

swallowing up his wife's immense fortune. Nothing was too much for the proud devotion and passionate affection of the Duchesse de Choiseul; she declined the personal favours which the King offered her, setting all her husband's friends the example of a fidelity which was equally honourable to them and to him."

CHAPTER XIX

The Wonderful Man-woman, Chevalier d'Éon

1728—1810

AGAINST the Government, the Ministers, King Louis XV. had a hidden counter-Government. It is true that this secret agency of the King scarcely governed in any way, but it was useful as a control ; it wrote letters which the Ministers—notably the Duc de Choiseul—did not see.

The principal members of this hidden agency were the Prince de Conti and the Abbé de Broglie. An important individual was the King's valet Lebel. This Mercury in the low love affairs of Louis the Well-Beloved was also his letter-bearer and go-between in other matters. Lebel took the King's secret missives to a clerk named Tercier, who forwarded them and received the replies.

It was the fashion in several Courts in those days for the great ladies to have in their household some young lady who held a very equivocal position. In Austria this was common, and in Paris, Madame de Grammont, who ruled the State through her brother Choiseul, had a young woman of this sort, who ruled her. Mademoiselle Julie was the object of court of all who expected any favour ; her lapdog was made the pet of Princes, while Julie herself received enormous bribes.

One of the principal secret agents of Louis XV. was a young person whom the King thought eminently fitted

to occupy this anomalous position of *femme de chambre*, reading-lady, and one scarcely knows what else, to no less a potentate than the Czarina of all the Russias. We say young "person" advisedly, as the proposed reading-lady was of doubtful sex, one who alternately bore the name of a man and a woman. Since we now know the truth about a matter which was the cause of very heavy wagers in England in the days of George III., we may as well at once say that the individual known alternately as Mademoiselle de Beaumont and the Chevalier d'Éon was in fact a man, and Éon his proper name. Eon was from Burgundy, and, the son of a lawyer, he commenced his career as a literary man under Fréron, and wrote two big books. By Grécourt, who has been described as a famous satyr, he was brought to the notice of the Prince de Conti. When Conti found that the young man of twenty-six had the face of a *demoiselle* of eighteen, he instantly saw how useful a member he might become of the King's secret service. The more so when he found the handsome, or rather pretty, young fellow to be a splendid swordsman, bold and courageous at the same time as he was exceptionally clever and absolutely unscrupulous.

Elizabeth of Russia, the daughter of Peter the Great, succeeded him on the throne in 1741. In the fourteen years since her drunken father's death, owing to Peter having caused the death of his own son and heir, there had been no less than five occupants of the Russian throne. These were Catharine I., Peter II., Anna, who was first Duchess of Courland, Ivan VII., and herself. With the assistance of the Frenchman la Chétardie, Elizabeth contrived to seize the throne. La Chétardie, however, found Elizabeth ungrateful, and, owing to the

influence of her favourite, Bestuchef, she turned from French to English influences.

While Elizabeth was not exactly a Catharine II., Louis XV. did not imagine, from what he knew of the character of the Empress, that she would be likely to be annoyed if, in the hope of winning her back to France, he should send her a *demoiselle de compagnie*, who was, as a matter of fact, a man. The thing was not, however, without its danger; one Frenchman sent to Russia had already perished mysteriously. In 1755, however, Éon expressed his willingness to go, and, as Mademoiselle de Beaumont, he proceeded accordingly to Russia. There he became excessively popular as the lady-companion of the Empress, who expressed her satisfaction to Louis XV. The result of Éon's mission was most important, since it resulted in the alliance of Russia to France and Austria, to endeavour to crush Frederick the Great in the Seven Years' War. The Empress Elizabeth showed the greatest affection for Mademoiselle de Beaumont, and entrusted her—or him—with the duties usually fulfilled by a great Ambassador: nothing less than the conveyance to the King of France of the treaty of alliance.

Upon his return to Paris Éon began at once to be talked about, everybody wondering if he were man, woman, or hermaphrodite. Being sent to the war, the Chevalier proved himself a warrior indeed. He distinguished himself as a *grand sabreur* who was foolhardy in his daring—no opponent who crossed swords with "the man-woman" escaped with his life. He was aide-de-camp to the Maréchal de Broglie upon the Rhine in 1762. The ladies, however, continued to maintain that he was a woman, and many *grandes dames* invited Mademoiselle de Beaumont to their houses.

The full names of this extraordinary diplomatist were Charles Geneviève Louis Auguste André Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont. Before the Empress Elizabeth died in 1762 he paid her a second visit, passing himself off, at all events before the world at large, as the Chevalier d'Éon, the brother of the former reading-lady or *gouvernante*. Then he was again successful in his negotiations, and on his way back to France appeared as envoy at Vienna.

When the question of peace with England had to be discussed, Éon, in the quality of Secretary of Embassy, accompanied that most amiable of Frenchmen, the Duc de Nivernais, to London. Versailles speculated upon the effect which the man-woman might produce upon Sophie Charlotte, the young German Queen and her German mother-in-law, widow of Frederick, Prince of Wales—a Princess who had been considerably talked about in connection with Lord Bute. As a matter of fact these Royal ladies were not long in displaying their curiosity, and the young Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz gave a handle to her enemies by causing Eon to come and visit her. These malicious tongues, to the Queen's great misfortune, proceeded to inform George III. that the false *demoiselle* had already been known only too well to Sophie Charlotte in her own country, and went so far in their calumny as to assert that the young Prince, afterwards George IV., was the son of the Chevalier d'Éon.

In reality the English Queen was the friend of France, as was also the Princess of Wales. The cause of the frequent visits of Éon, disguised as Mademoiselle de Beaumont, to Sophie Charlotte, was merely to discuss the question of the demolition of Dunkirk. The Queen

and the King's mother were anxious, if possible, to save France from this humiliation. As the actual agent of Lord Bute, Éon returned to Paris to report progress ; he was awarded the cross of Saint Louis by the King, and went back to London once more.

This actual employment, by the Earl of Bute, of a Frenchman to proceed to Paris, in place of an English nobleman being selected for the purpose, gave considerable colour to the accusation made against the English Minister and, his supposed mistress, the Princess Dowager of having accepted large bribes in order to accord favourable terms to France. Lord Camden, years later, stated his conviction of the truth of the charge ; especially as, although the Earl of Bute had merely an estate of £1,500 a year rental, he sunk as much as £300,000 in land and houses.

The vicious attacks upon the Earl by Wilkes, in the *North Briton*, resulted in his resignation very shortly after the Peace of Paris had been signed in 1763. "Junius" also, the wonderful anonymous writer in the *Public Advertiser*, whom Burke called "that mighty boar of the forest," sustained the charges of corruption against Bute. None more than "Junius" possessed the intimate and minute knowledge of Court secrets, making it believed that the writer moved in the circle of the Court, and was intimately acquainted not only with Ministerial measures and intrigues, but with every domestic incident. That the Earl of Bute became possessed of large sums from some unknown source is the more evident from the fact that he expended as much as £10,000 to publish nine volumes delineating British botany. When only twelve copies had been printed he destroyed the plates !

When the Chevalier d'Éon was about to be sent to Paris as Lord Bute's envoy, the Duc de Praslin wrote to the French Ambassador, saying that he could not believe it—it was so utterly against all the usages of diplomacy. The Duc de Nivernais wrote back—slyly: "My dear friend, you are an idiot (une bête). You have no idea how much we are beloved here!"

These circumstances tend to show that already was Éon in receipt of secret instructions from the King, and when, foolishly, Praslin obtained from Choiseul the recall of Nivernais, Éon was, during the interregnum, actually appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of St. James.

The Chevalier now had a very secret commission from the King. This, although peace had been so recently declared—only, in fact, a few months previously—was one of a treacherous nature. Éon was instructed to observe, reconnoitre, and plan a scheme for the invasion of England. And this, too, with a ruined France! In the following year the details became known in England of a horrible plan for the burning of Portsmouth and Plymouth, of which Choiseul was known to have approved. It is probable that Éon himself made this plot known to revenge himself upon Choiseul, who was seeking his life after having failed to seize his person.

The Comte de Guerchy had, in the meantime, been appointed Ambassador over the head of the man-woman. The sole merits of Guerchy consisted in possessing a very pretty wife. Since the Duc de Praslin found Madame de Guerchy very much to his taste, he persuaded his cousin the Duc de Choiseul to appoint the husband to a post paid at the rate of 200,000 livres yearly. The Chevalier reverted to his old position of Secretary of

Embassy, and, with the advent of Guerchy, he commenced to be in danger. For the trinity, of Choiseul, his sister Madame de Grammont, and Praslin, had resolved to strike a blow at the King, to take away from Louis the last entrenchments behind which he was struggling to protect the Monarchy from the Ministers.

To carry these entrenchments it was necessary to smash up the King's secret agency, of which Éon appeared to form one of the more inconsiderable members. A blow at the Chevalier would speedily convince the Prince de Conti and the rest that in the King lay no protection—that the Duc de Choiseul could override his master at will.

Before the arrival of Guerchy in London, in the month of August, 1763, in order to entrap Éon, a spy of the name of Vergy was sent to him. Vergy was, like the Chevalier, a writer of books ; it was, therefore, hoped to catch the latter by the side of his literary tastes. This man of many parts saw through Vergy like a pane of glass, and sent him flying. Choiseul was furious, and the more so when, Praslin having written a sharp reprimand, the acting Minister Plenipotentiary replied proudly and with biting sarcasm, as if feeling secure in his own strength. The cabal felt the defiance hidden behind this reply, and were all the more determined to get hold of Éon and thrust him into the Bastille ; no pay was sent to him, and he was recalled by Praslin. He, however, remained in London as Secretary, even after Guerchy had taken over the charge of the Embassy.

The King now wrote to his agent privily, telling him that he had signed his recall, but to pay no attention to it ; to assume his woman's attire and conceal himself in the City, as he was not safe in his hôtel in London,

and had powerful enemies in Paris. The King plucked up courage shortly after. In October he told Laverdy, the Contrôleur des Finances, to write a letter to the Chevalier d'Éon, instructing him to continue his duties in London. Since he was employed under the Minister of Foreign Affairs—that is, Choiseul—the King obtained the official seal of the Foreign Office, and surreptitiously affixed it to the Finance Minister's epistle.

At the same time Choiseul and Praslin were acting in an exactly opposite sense, forcing the King to write a letter to the English Government requesting the seizure of Éon, and his dispatch to French soil. An order was sent to the Comte de Guerchy to seize the Chevalier's papers.

Of all these actions, to which he was forced by his tyrants, Louis warned his agent. "If you cannot save yourself, at all events save your papers!" the Monarch wrote on November 4th. For fear lest he should be seized by force, the warlike Éon now fortified his house in London, assembled his friends around him, and armed them with guns, swords, and pistols. His residence held quite a garrison, and the British Government, sympathising with him, flatly refused the extradition of the young French Secretary of Embassy who was firmly believed to be a woman. Bets were now being freely made as to his sex. His enemy de Guerchy himself intimating that he was a woman, judgment was obtained for a wager, to the amount of £700, before Lord Mansfield, several witnesses having sworn to the female sex of the Chevalier.

After first bringing an action for libel against Éon in the English Courts, which he won, the Comte de Guerchy pretended to make friends with the Chevalier, asked him to supper, and caused his equerry, Chazal,

to put opium in his wine. The wily Éon was far too wide-awake to allow himself to be put to sleep with opium! The poisoner, Chazal, was saved by the Ambassador, who now apparently begged Vergy to assassinate the King's secret agent! What is certain is that an emissary of Praslin's received instructions to bring the Chevalier to Paris alive or dead.

In return for his libel action the former lady-reader to Elizabeth of Russia now dragged the French Ambassador before the tribunals of London on a charge of attempted poisoning. Vergy confessed his share in the proposed crime while expressing his contrition, and his testimony was accepted and believed. Since Éon had no money wherewith to buy Vergy, there seems no reason to doubt that he spoke the truth, and that those who had sought to poison with opium their King's secret agent, when foiled, determined to take his life. What was the life of one man in those days? Had not the Seven Years' War, of which the Duc de Choiseul had been so greatly the cause, recently been responsible for the lives of a million men?

Before the Court of King's Bench de Guerchy consented to appear, but, as an Ambassador, he refused to be tried by a judge and jury. The King's Bench stifled the whole disgraceful business; but did not exonerate the French Ambassador, especially as he failed to produce Chazal, who had poured the opium into the wine of the guest at his own table.

De Guerchy was afraid to remain long in England, and, upon his return to France, Louis XV. and the Dauphin formed their own opinions as to his guilt, after subjecting him to a close questioning. They had no doubt that Choiseul had ordered the opium, and for

this reason it was that Louis XV. always considered him a poisoner, while, after him, Louis XVI. believed that he murdered the Dauphin with poison, and that more than probably he or his sister poisoned the Dauphine also.

What most surprises those who have studied the career of the usually astute Duc de Choiseul, is to see how, in the middle of this disgraceful affair, he behaves like a perfect simpleton, actually imagining that he can deceive the wide-awake Chevalier with honied words. In his attempt to prevent him from carrying through his accusation against Guerchy on November 14th, 1764, the Duc wrote the most amiable epistle to "his dear Éon." He begs him to return to France as soon as he possibly can, as he will give him a nice post in the army! We can imagine the attitude which "the dear Éon" probably assumed to have much resembled that not uncommonly taken up by a vulgar little street-boy who feels himself safely out of the reach of his tormentors.

Éon was henceforward safe. The English were furious that the French should be setting their spies, detectives, and police officials to work in London as if in the streets of Paris. The people of London vowed that if a hair of Éon's head was injured they would tear the French Ambassador and his Embassy in pieces. The result of the attack on the Chevalier was, moreover, that George Grenville and the Duke of Bedford, the Ministers who succeeded Bute, insisted upon the carrying out of the provision of the Peace of Paris concerning the demolition of the fortifications of Dunkirk. Thus France drank the cup of humiliation to the lees!

Nevertheless, in Paris the cabal continued to tyrannise and bully the King. To prove to him his impotence,

From an engraving after a drawing by J. Conde.

THE CHEVALIER D'ÉON.

they began to arrange so that his letters from his secret agents arrived unsealed. He was forced to beg Sartine, the Lieutenant de Police, to help him—to lend his protection to his agents.

Nevertheless, after the return of the Comte de Guerchy, the Chevalier d'Éon continued to represent the Court of Versailles in London, although not officially recognised as Ambassador.

After Louis XVI. had been three years on the throne, in 1777, Éon returned to Versailles, when the young King, for reasons which have never been known, compelled him to change his dragoon's uniform for female attire. He returned to England, as a woman, to collect his effects; and while there was placed on the list of *émigrés* by the revolutionary tribunal established during his absence.

He supported himself in London by the sale of his library, by a pension from King George III., and by giving exhibitions of his wonderful skill in fencing. He made one more visit to France, and petitioned the National Assembly for leave to serve in the army. He was applauded for his request, but his services declined. Eon now returned to England, where he lived for thirty years longer, always dressed in woman's attire, under the name of Madame d'Éon. During this period he wrote a number of historical and political works of considerable merit. Upon his death in 1810 the curiosity of the day was satisfied, as Madame d'Éon was found to be a man after all. He was eighty-two when he died.

CHAPTER XX

Downfall of the Choiseuls

1765—1770

No event in the long reign of Louis the Well-Beloved made him more hated in France than the treatment meted out to M. de la Chalotais, the Procureur-Général of the Parliament of Rennes. For this the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Governor of Brittany, was responsible in the first place; but later the Dauphin and his advisers, la Vauguyon and Nicolaï, the violent Bishop of Verdun, were privy to the whole affair. They had all the more cause to hate la Chalotais as he had recently written such a crushing indictment of the Jesuits.

The Parliament of Rennes and the *noblesse* in the Estates of Brittany had both protested, not only against edicts ordering the forced labour of the peasantry in road-making, but also against their Governor.

D'Aiguillon, who was nothing but a coxcomb, had imagined that he could separate the nobility from the men of the robe, but went to work in such a foolish manner that he only increased the general hatred against himself. The whole of the Parliament of Rennes resigned, whereupon la Chalotais and four other members were arrested. The better to cause his downfall, forged letters

were written in his name, violently abusing the King. The affair was so badly managed that the forgery was evident, and the Parliament of Paris sought to do justice in the matter. It had been managed by a young and worthless man named de Calonne, appointed Procureur-Général in the place of la Chalotais. While the various Parliaments in France were violently crying out for a combination between themselves, the King, persuaded by the amiable Dauphine—who was commencing to lead him—to an act of courage, without Choiseul, took an unjust step. He appointed a commission of the Grand Council to judge the affair; they were a packed body, therefore the forgers were perfectly safe, while la Chalotais, his son, and friends were thrown into dungeons.

A little later, in December 1765, the Dauphin died—people said of poison—when the influence of his Saxon widow increased all the more. She had the same Jesuit advisers as her late husband, therefore the persecution against la Chalotais continued.

While d'Aiguillon and de Calonne were pursuing the matter against him with their forged documents, even seeking to bring the innocent Procureur-Général to the gallows or the wheel, Choiseul, the friend of the Parliaments, had an inspiration. This was, the better to hold the King in his power, to make him commit himself. He caused Louis to affix a note to the bottom of a document written by the unscrupulous Calonne, saying that he acknowledged it, or backed it, that Calonne had done nothing without his orders. Thus the King involved himself with forgers. When, later, the Parliament of Paris instituted proceedings against the Duc d'Aiguillon, and, by the secret instigation of

Choiseul, 1,800 Bretons came to Paris as witnesses, they came, therefore, as much as the accusers of the King as of Calonne and d'Aiguillon.

The King was eventually compelled to stop the proceedings against la Chalotais and his comrades. He did so in an arrogant edict, in which he said, " We shall have the satisfaction of finding nobody guilty, but shall take such measures as appear good to us to maintain tranquillity." Without according them a trial, he at the same time exiled the Procureur-Général and his companions to Saintes.

This arbitrary action against innocent men only increased the agitation. D'Aiguillon had to be replaced in Brittany by the Duc de Duras ; but the restored Parliament and the Estates now combined to forward accusations against their former Governor, when the King forcibly took possession of all the papers and thus stopped the whole of the proceedings. This, however, was not until some five years had elapsed from the original arrest of la Chalotais, and, in the meanwhile, the discontent of the Parliaments had become so violent that they addressed the King at times in a manner which was little short of insolent.

In the midst of all these storms, however, the Duc de Choiseul maintained his place. He had thrown out so many anchors in different directions that he remained firm in public opinion. If ever Minister should have been discredited by the result of a war, that Minister was the Duc de Choiseul ; and yet, strange to say, it was in a considerable measure owing to the ridiculous bluff which he made of pretending to want another war, one of revenge, that he retained his position in the ruined State. He had the support of Charles III. of Spain in

their mutual hatred of England, and, most imprudently, openly sent to Spain artificers to cast new cannon for that Power. This was as much as to warn England of what she might expect. At the same time, with equal indiscretion, Choiseul took up an impertinent attitude towards Frederick II., assuming the rôle of a personal enemy. He caused Palissot to write for him a most offensive poem against the King of Prussia, and went about everywhere saying that he himself was the author.

As he had the Press, the Philosophers, the Parliaments, and the salons with him, people did not choose to see the danger to France caused by this cheap braggadocio of the Minister—that it was quite on the cards that some sudden, headstrong act on the part of Spain might drag the ruined country into another conflict, in which she must inevitably be hopelessly crushed.

But Choiseul could do anything, commit any disgraceful action, and if there were any murmurs the gag was put on at once. One such action was against a defenceless woman, his own brother the Comte de Stainville's young wife. Choiseul had been pursuing this sister-in-law with his attentions; but she refused to yield to his dishonourable proposals. Thereupon, in revenge, he made use of his authority to commit an act of downright blackguardism. In the middle of a Court ball he had her arrested by police agents as a disreputable woman, and caused her to be confined in a convent of correction. It seems almost incredible to us to understand how such disgraceful deeds could have passed unchallenged in France not a hundred and forty years ago!

As we have already mentioned, his sister Madame de Grammont had her master in the shape of her Mademoiselle Julie, who, therefore, through Choiseul, practically

ruled the State. It was owing to Mademoiselle Julie that the France of the Revolution was able to flatter itself by calling the Corsican Buonaparte a Frenchman.

An Italian from the Republic of Genoa, being received by this Abigail one day, found her sad and in a thoughtful mood. He could see that it was not the fact that her lap-dog wanted for anything that caused this pre-occupation, as several Princes and nobles had already been in Julie's salon, and brought new ribbons and delicacies for the over-fed poodle. It was not difficult to extract the secret from the young lady—possibly it had been divined in advance. Mademoiselle Julie had some bank-notes—a great number of bank-notes—which were worthless. They were in Canadian money, and Canada had become British.

The wily Genoese suggested that possibly, if Julie could interest the Duchesse de Grammont in a scheme by which France should assist Genoa to subdue its revolted province of Corsica, Genoese bank-notes would make a good exchange for Canadian ones. Madame de Grammont warmly took up the affair with her brother, and he managed cleverly to deceive Genoa by letting matters drag on, until eventually France intervened by sending troops on her own account to Corsica. The worn-out and indebted Genoese were only too glad in the end to cede the island to Louis XV. as security for old liabilities.

The French troops, under the Comte de Vaux, made a successful campaign against the Corsicans under Pascal Paoli, the hero of Corsican independence, who had been secretly supported with money and arms by England. He was finally utterly overthrown in a bloody battle at the Bridge of Golo. Here, in their last effort for

independence, Paoli and the Corsicans made a rampart of their dead, the wounded lying down among the corpses to give the survivors time to effect their retreat.

Vainly now the brave Paoli sought for armed help from England, while Choiseul, pursuing his policy of stirring up renewed strife, instigated Opposition members of the English Parliament to demand British intervention. Burke voiced the ideas of many when he exclaimed, "Corsica as a province of France is to me an object of alarm!" But Lord Mansfield, the celebrated judge, spoke the truth when he said, "The Ministry is too weak and the nation too wise to make war on account of Corsica." Therefore, while England gave a home to the patriot Pascal Paoli, sending a frigate to bring him to England, she gave nothing more. Paoli eventually was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Corsica was the last conquest of the French Bourbon dynasty. Choiseul had lost all the others made from the time of Cardinal Richelieu, but the "bloody rock" of the Mediterranean has remained, and probably always will remain, French.

While the action of Mademoiselle Julie had thus resulted in the acquisition of an important island, she was also, indirectly, the cause of the death of a brave but violent man—the crazy Comte Lally-Tollendal, or Tullendally, of which place he was Baron in Ireland. After having sustained a ten months' siege in Pondicherry, Lally, in January, 1761, yielded with his 700 remaining men to the 22,000 whom General Coote, supported by fourteen ships, had brought against him. Being taken prisoner to London, Lally heard that he was charged by his enemies in France with various crimes. The late Governor-General of French-India, therefore, obtained

his parole, and foolishly repaired to Paris in person. To hasten his public trial, Lally demanded to be placed in the Bastille.

No sooner had this former commander of the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy arrived, than Choiseul realised that, to excuse all his own mistakes in the matter of the Seven Years' War, he could not do better than throw everything on to him. After the English defeat at Fontenoy, and subsequent fighting with the young Pretender, Charles Edward, at Falkirk, Lally had succeeded in escaping from England. His adventures, whether while proceeding twice to London in disguise or when falling into the hands of smugglers, were most romantic. Recognised as a man of resource, the Comte was, just before the commencement of the Seven Years' War, consulted by the French Ministry upon the best mode of impairing the power of England. He then strongly urged an attack upon her East Indian possessions, with the fatal result of the loss to France of India.

The greatest enemy of Lally in Paris had married a lady of the house of Choiseul, which made the Duc all the more anxious to have the Irishman judged before the Parliament of Paris. He feared the presence and the energy of Lally, and, accordingly, desired to get rid of him; but this Madame de Grammont would not allow. It was publicly said in Paris that when Lally returned he had given to the faithful Julie a present of diamonds, which had been transferred to her mistress. On account of this rumour, the Duchesse de Grammont went to her brother and furiously urged the arrest of the General.

While signing the order, Choiseul secretly gave Lally warning, to allow him the opportunity of getting away.

The headstrong man, however, proceeded direct to the Bastille. Thenceforward he was lost. During the nineteen months that the unfortunate Irishman remained in the Bastille, crowds of persons, ruined by the East Indian Company, beset the Parliament urging his trial. The men of the robe, utterly ignorant as they were of all military matters, nevertheless decided that Lally had "betrayed the interests of the King." After a trial, which was a mockery, in which he was not even allowed to appear in his own defence, he was sentenced to death.

When the hero of Fontenoy heard this word "betrayed" in his judgment, he became mad with rage, seized a knife and tried to kill himself. In this attempt he failed, and was seized and dragged off, roaring with fury, in a tumbril to the place of execution. There the executioner was a bungler. He missed his stroke and could not cut off Lally's head. Eventually, in the presence of the enormous crowd assembled, he *sawed off* the unfortunate man's head!

This horrible event took place on May 9th, 1766, and the head of Lally was the sole payment, on account, which Choiseul was able to offer to the furious people ruined in India, those reduced to despair by Canada, and the *rentiers*, who, being constantly put off by the Government, were starving.

When the Minister of Finance, Silhouette, had made a bankruptcy of the State in 1761, Choiseul had promised that the *rentiers* should be paid up in full when the peace was signed. The people had tried to take the matter good-humouredly—making suits of clothes without pockets which were called "silhouettes." When the peace came, in 1763, nothing was paid. Choiseul then deferred payment in full until 1767, and again from 1767 to 1769.

In that year the Abbé Terray, who held the Finances, and had been called, from his methods, the Exterminator-General, became far more bankrupt than even Silhouette had been.

Following his old tactics, Choiseul said that the general misery was entirely Terray's fault. Terray, however, was a man whom the Minister had selected from among the Parliamentary ranks. When he saw himself thus unjustly and impudently held up to public execration he was not afraid to reply to Choiseul, "Whose bankruptcy is it—yours or mine? It is your fifteen hundred millions of expenditure of the Seven Years' War, your seventy-five millions of the subsidy which you are still paying to Austria, which are the real bankruptcy of to-day!"

This reply on the part of Terray constituted a defeat for Choiseul, since the public only too clearly saw its justice. He became only more anxious for another war, which alone could keep him at the head of affairs, and, in the meantime, overran and annexed the Papal territory of Avignon in the south of France. The excuse for this action was that the Pope, Clement XIII., furious at the dismissal of the Jesuits from Spain, Naples, and Parma, had excommunicated the weakest Bourbon ruler of these three—the Infante Don Philip.

In his outside policy Choiseul, always so sure of the affection of Austria, found before long that he had overreached himself. Never would he have believed it possible that Vienna, the mortal enemy of Prussia, could, in spite of him, come to terms with Frederick concerning the division of Poland. There, all had been disorder since the death of Augustus III. in 1763; and Frederick the Great and Catharine II. of Russia had

already made a secret treaty by the following year, which equally barred the throne to any son of Augustus and any Frenchman—such as the Prince de Conti—anxious to be elected. Catharine, by force, caused the election of her own Polish paramour, Prince Poniatowski, to the throne.

At the same time the Prussian and Russian rulers secured their protection to the *dissidents*—as the Protestants and members of the Greek Church were called in Poland. The Roman Catholic clergy were very largely in the ascendant in the country, and by their fanatical and unenlightened opposition these *dissidents* had been very greatly oppressed ; or, at all events, it was so represented, and it was to the advantage of those who subsequently divided Poland among themselves to keep up this idea. The two authors Mickiewitz, however, in their *History of Poland*, throw a different light on the subject.

They say that the *dissidents* were only members of the Calvinistic and Lutheran Churches, and did not include the Greeks, who then were reconciled to the Church of Rome. Further, they state that in no way were the *dissidents*, as Prussia and Russia maintained, kept in servitude. They had two hundred churches and perfect religious liberty, were allowed to hold rank in the army, and were only excluded from office in the Government and the right of voting to elect a King.

Whatever may have been the disadvantages under which the *dissidents* laboured, Prussia and Russia, after placing Poniatowski on the throne, in the most arbitrary manner, and under pretence of supporting the *dissidents*, interfered in the internal affairs of the country. The result was a powerful confederation of the large Catholic

majority, called the Confederation of Barr, and a state of civil war in Poland. When Choiseul first heard of the agreement between Prussia and Russia he said, "It is a long way off—it does not concern France!" Then he said, "They cannot possibly agree." After that, becoming alarmed, he encouraged the resistance of the Catholic party and sent a few troops, just enough to be beaten, to assist the insurgent confederates of Barr.

Russia sent Cossacks and regular troops into Poland, whereupon Choiseul assured the Catholics that he would rouse the Turks on their behalf, to fight against the Russians and create a diversion. This, through Vergennes, the French Ambassador at Constantinople, he succeeded in doing on October 30th, 1768, when a Turkish and Mahomedan army set out to join the Catholic Poles. The Russians defeated the Turks on land, and further sent a fleet—which was fêted by the British and helped by them on its way from the Baltic—to attack the Turks in the Mediterranean. The Turks were defeated in a sea-battle at Tschesmé in July, 1770, and this defeat was a severe blow to the policy of Choiseul.

The news of this battle, carried into Germany, found Frederick of Prussia and Joseph II. (son of Maria Theresa, born 1741, and now Emperor) in friendly conference. And this was a second defeat for Choiseul! His Turks were crushed, and his Austrians had turned their backs upon him! For whatever was done by the young Joseph was only that which was authorised by his mother, Maria Theresa. He had been elected Emperor of Germany, in succession to his father, in 1765; but she retained the personal rule of her own dominions, giving her son a minor share in their Government. He received only

the dignity of an assistant without any real influence, although he was placed at the head of military affairs.

While raising the Turks to assist the Poles, Choiseul had also made a strenuous effort to induce the Austrians, whom he was still paying, to take up the cudgels on behalf of their Polish fellow-Catholics, and now, lo and behold! instead of doing so, they were hobnobbing with their Protestant oppressors. The effect of this in France was to give the wily Choiseul, who had always prided himself upon his astuteness, the appearance of having been nothing but the dupe and tool of Austria all along. It weakened him in the public opinion of the Court and the nation, and, with a view to rehabilitate himself, he continued to push Spain to her ruin, to precipitate her into a war in which France would participate, and by which all Europe would be once more set on fire.

By a study of the interior intrigues of Versailles, which had become more acute since the sudden death of the Dauphine in February, 1767, can be understood this fury of the cabal of Choiseul, Madame de Grammont, and Praslin for war. For, unless it took place, their downfall was certain. For thirteen months after her husband died that sensible Saxon Princess his widow had devoted herself so closely to the King that he had taken no new official mistress to replace Madame de Pompadour. To be nearer to the King she had not even flinched from occupying the apartments which had the worst reputation at Versailles, those of Lebel, the head valet, which went at the Court by the name of *le Trébuchet* (the bird-trap). Several of the King's mistresses had been lodged in this suite for the first few nights after their arrival. Pompadour was one, and the du Barry was soon to be another.

The Dauphine was determined to make secure her

position as the future Regent of the Kingdom and guardian of her young children, especially to obtain the charge of her young son—now Dauphin—afterwards to become Louis XVI. Naturally a tall, handsome blonde, she seemed to become younger every day as she devoted herself to Louis, accompanying him everywhere, driving or on horseback to his hunting parties. Only ten months after her husband's death it had seemed as if she were about to assume those reins of Government which for so long had been held in the hands of the Marquise de Pompadour. Already had the immediate fall of the Stainvilles seemed at hand. The Dauphine had arranged her future Ministry, had told the Duc d'Aiguillon that he was to have Choiseul's position, and promised the violent Bishop Nicolaï that he would be made a Cardinal and Grand Almoner. And then, one day, suddenly, just after taking her chocolate, the strong, able-bodied woman fell to the ground and had an enormous loss of blood (February 1st, 1767). Madame Adélaïde, who was present, administered to her some poison antidote which she possessed, but she died in a day or two ; when one doctor, Tronchin, said *poison*, another, Sénac, said *accident*. All, however, were afraid of Choiseul, and even Madame Adélaïde soon held her tongue, the more so as she wished to obtain the care and education of the child Dauphin. In this she was disappointed ; the boy was given to the Queen Marie Lesczynska—who herself died in the following year.

The only action taken by the King, when the Dauphin died and the world said *poison*, was very feebly to tell Choiseul—who boldly faced him—that he regretted the Dauphin but little ! When the Dauphine followed her husband, he ordered no public inquiry, but privately sent

a large pension to his secret agent the Chevalier d'Éon, who had denounced Choiseul and Praslin as poisoners.

After the loss of this excellent woman, who was as good as her father and grandfather had been corrupt, the principal nobles opposed to the powerful Minister commenced seeking everywhere for a woman, unconnected with the Austrian faction, to become the King's mistress. Of these nobles the principal were the Duc de Richelieu and his nephew the Duc d'Aiguillon.

That woman was eventually found, in one of the lowest classes, the mistress of a gambler and *roué* of the worst reputation. Her name was Mademoiselle Lange, and later she became the Comtesse du Barry.

Through Mademoiselle Lange—indeed a strange saviour !—was France preserved from war ; through this woman—originally a regular *gamine* of the streets—was accomplished the overthrow of, first the Duchesse de Grammont, and then the Duc de Choiseul.

CHAPTER XXI

Mademoiselle Lange, Comtesse du Barry

1769—1771

For a period of several years after the death of Madame de Pompadour, that licentious Monarch Louis XV. had no declared and official mistress. The latter days of the Marquise, and those after she died, had only been remarkable for the temporary connections of the debauched Prince with various ladies of little notoriety. The Marquise de Choiseul-Beaupré, owing to the intrigues of her connection the Duc de Choiseul, proved to be but an interlude; such also were Madame de Martinville, Mademoiselle Grandi, Mademoiselle de Ville, who was a low woman, and the unfortunate Baronne de Salis. Of this unhappy woman the brutal King obtained the favours by force, with the result that she killed herself in her despair. The interesting and beautiful Mademoiselle de Romans, of whom Madame de Pompadour became so jealous that she caused her infant son by the King to be spirited away, had ceased, like the others, to be more than an occasional object of interest to Louis "the Dissolute"—as he should rather be called than "the Well-Beloved."

It was in vain that the Duchesse de Grammont, sister of the Duc de Choiseul, had made all the

advances possible to captivate the Monarch—he did not appreciate her; moreover, being the sister of the Minister, the courtiers intrigued by all means in their power to prevent this very determined and unscrupulous lady from stepping into Pompadour's empty shoes.

That old rake the Duc de Richelieu, who had given the Duchesse de Châteauroux to the King, had, after her death, formed a treaty of alliance with Madame de Pompadour. Now that the Marquise had also proceeded to the land of shades, he and others, among them the Prince de Soubise and Richelieu's nephew the Duc d'Aiguillon, desired to see the Monarch make a new choice from among the noble ladies who had been presented at Court. The influence of the King's daughter Madame Adélaïde, and of the Dauphine, while she lived, was sufficient to prevent this. They preferred that the King should pursue his low pleasures in his own way, at his Parc aux Cerfs and such-like low resorts, than that he should give them another woman like Pompadour to rule them all at Versailles. Richelieu, however, contrived to effect the sale of the Parc aux Cerfs.

At length, about the end of 1769, a disreputable noble, the Comte Jean du Barry, informed the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu that he possessed in his mistress, Mademoiselle Lange, a perfectly faultless beauty, a real dainty fit for the King. He explained that this treasure—originally a milliner's apprentice, who had ceased to be virtuous at the age of fourteen—had the most free and *dégagé* manners, coupled to the most lively disposition; he was certain that if only she could gain access to the King, who was always in search of some new sensation,

he would find it in the absolute abandon of his charming mistress.

"Then all our fortunes will be made!" said du Barry, "and I am determined to manage it; but the difficulty up to the present has been Lebel, the King's *valet de chambre*, who will not accord her an interview, or he would be convinced. I have got her outside now," he continued. "I shall call her in and leave her with you, M. le Duc, that you may judge of her charms for yourself."

After having seen the lady a time or two, apparently both the rascal Duc de Richelieu and his nephew, the Duc d'Aiguillon, were convinced that the young woman, then twenty-four years old, was indeed just the thing likely to captivate the jaded passions of the Monarch. Means were arranged to induce that old Mercury, Lebel, to receive the Comte du Barry and Marie Jeanne de Lange, or Vaubernier—for her real paternal name was uncertain. She was herself already the mother of a daughter of uncertain parentage.

The Comte left his angel with Lebel, as he had done with the Duc de Richelieu. She made love to the agent of the King's pleasures with such success that, at length, he consented to pass her on to his master, never dreaming that the King would think of this low-bred woman for more than an hour. In this Lebel was highly mistaken, for, thoroughly well schooled by the Comte du Barry, Mademoiselle Lange exaggerated rather than tried to conceal her vulgarities and abandoned nature, with the result that Louis, hitherto accustomed to find himself treated with respect even in his love affairs, was delighted at the novelty.

From the very first Marie Jeanne treated the King

From an engraving after Cosway.

COMTESSE DU BARRY.

with the same familiarity as she would have used to any chance lover. The surprised Louis was enraptured at this *sans-gêne*, and, after a few meetings, astonished Lebel by informing him that he intended keeping this new-found paragon altogether. The passion of the King had now reached the point of delirium, with the result that he informed Lebel of the plan, which Comte Jean du Barry had conceived, by means of which Mademoiselle Lange could become ennobled, and as such be openly received at Court as the King's mistress—this was, for a sum of money, to induce his brother Comte Guillaume to marry her.

It would appear as if even the *valet de chambre* of a Bourbon King were capable of retaining more scruples than his master. Accustomed as he was to minister to the pleasures of the King, Lebel had, nevertheless, preserved some idea of what was befitting to the Crown. Lebel argued with his master violently against this step, especially as the King carried his infatuation so far as to say that he had determined on the public presentation at Court, to himself and his daughters, of his low-born favourite. Lebel did not hesitate to tell Louis that the presentation of such a woman would make all France murmur.

"My poor Dominique," replied the King, "I am sorry if it annoys you, but your *protégée* is adorable. I am crazy about her ; I am determined to give her a public proof of my tenderness. She will be presented, and nobody will say a word."

The *valet de chambre* still insisted—pointing out to the King his certain loss of the respect of his subjects. At last Louis lost his temper, seized the tongs and told his old servant that he would brain him with them if

he said another word. Old Lebel went out, was taken violently ill from the shock, and died in two days.

The *valet de chambre* being dead, Mademoiselle Lange found a much greater obstacle to her elevation in the person of the Duc de Choiseul ; in spite of which the King carried his project through, with the result that his mistress became the wife of the Comte Guillaume du Barry. The marriage was, indeed, but one in name, the husband signing a statement saying that he would not even dine with his wife on the day of his nuptials, and that he would not approach within four leagues of her residence.

Whether or no this last proviso were kept to the letter, the dreams of the Comte Jean du Barry were now realised, for not only he but all members of the du Barry family made their fortune. The prodigalities of the new favourite were unbounded; the King refused her nothing, and she gave away with both hands. Among others, her mother was brought from Vaucouleurs and richly established in Paris, and a supposed godfather, M. Dumonceau, who had caused her for a time to be educated in a convent, received a large pension. In addition to the presents lavished upon her by the King, by Court officials and those seeking favour and preferment, the Comtesse du Barry drew more than eighteen millions of francs from the treasury, to meet the exigencies of her husband and the scamp who had now become her brother-in-law.

Since at first her conduct was always frivolous in the extreme, and she had not the faintest pretensions of knowing how to behave at Court, the Duc de Richelieu and the Duc d'Aiguillon took particular pains to give her lessons in deportment. For no sooner had Made-

moiselle Lange been warmly received by the King than the Duc de Richelieu, who had at first laughed at the projects of Jean du Barry, became the very humble servant of the rising star. He was then on duty for the year as First Gentleman of the Chamber, and constantly about the King's person, and instead of combating his master's ignoble passion, assured him, on the contrary, that he found the young woman a perfect divinity and worthy of all the honours which Louis might see fit to shower upon her.

Richelieu, from the first, conceived the project of using the ascendancy of this woman as the means of removing the Duc de Choiseul, of whom he was jealous, from the Ministry. He therefore lost no time in schooling Madame du Barry in his own ideas concerning Choiseul; which were that he was utterly destroying the military service. Concerning Choiseul's famous Family Compact of the Bourbons, Richelieu said that it was a mere puerility as a matter of policy, for that sovereigns had no longer any relations when their personal interests were concerned; that on such occasions all treaties were broken sword in hand. Far better than this Compact was to have a well-disciplined army and money in the State coffers—and Choiseul had neither.

The Minister, on his side, considered himself too secure in power to be likely to be affected by the Duc de Richelieu's influence either with the King or the new favourite. She was by nature good-hearted, *bonne fille*, and had no cause to hate him or any one, and it was by his own disdainful conduct towards her that Choiseul at last roused her resentment. Never dreaming that she would last long in the King's favour, he never sought to disguise the disdain with which he regarded the upstart

low woman, whom all others at the Court were in such a hurry to cultivate. On the other hand, he intended to crush her upon the first opportunity, should she indeed be worth the trouble of crushing. The Duc showed his feelings so plainly that, with the best intentions in the world, the newly made Comtesse could but hate him in return.

When the time came for the famous presentation of the mistress at Court, three-parts of the courtiers never believed that such a thing could actually take place. Choiseul, after making strong representations to the King against it, was forced to give way, while still hoping until the last moment that some accident might happen to prevent it.

Such an accident did, indeed, nearly occur. All the Court was at Versailles, but bets were being freely made for and against the presentation. The night arrived, all else were assembled, but Madame du Barry came not! The King, in a great state of agitation, was constantly looking at his watch; by his side were the Duc de Choiseul and the Duc de Richelieu watching his face, and the latter sharing his anxiety. In the Grand Chamber without all the faces, including those of Mesdames the King's daughters, were either overshadowed with sadness or radiant with joy.

At this moment the King recalled to memory all that had been said to him of the ridicule attending such a presentation, and murmured between his teeth something about deferring it. Choiseul was triumphant; if it were deferred it would never take place. Richelieu ran to the window, not knowing what to think.

Meanwhile Madame du Barry, detained for an extra hour by a coiffeur in Paris, ten miles away from Ver-

sailles, was quite unaware of the terrible sensation that her delay was causing at the Court. One little additional hour, in which to make herself more beautiful, seemed nothing to the *ci-devant grisette*.

However, the King was on the very point of declaring that the function was not to take place. He went to the window for the last time and saw nothing, and returned undecided whether to give the absent beauty five minutes more or no. He had just put his watch back for the last time with an air of decision, when Richelieu made an exclamation from the window. The dissolute old courtier ran to the King: "I see a carriage—the liveries of the Comtesse du Barry!" The King's face became all smiles, but he vowed to give his favourite a good scolding.

The vow was forgotten when she appeared, a minute later. The Duc de Richelieu was enjoying the look of discomfiture on the face of Choiseul, but could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the elegant *tournure* and noble appearance which Madame du Barry presented as she entered. He could, indeed, now scarcely recognise, in the noble-looking lady before him, that *petite* Lange who had come to him to beg his goodwill. Even the enemies of the favourite were compelled to avow, if beauty and elegance give the right to approach a throne, that the Comtesse du Barry was indeed worthy of the privilege.

In spite of this triumph of the courtesan, the Duc de Choiseul did not modify his attitude towards her. He felt so sure of the power that he held, was so secure in his old tyranny, by which he had held the Monarch grovelling abjectly before him, that he had no fear. Above all, he knew the King's hatred of changing his

habits ; all that he now had to do was to sign the documents which the Minister put before him, without even taking the trouble to read them. Had not Choiseul, moreover, apparently recaptured the powerful protection and gratitude of the Court of Austria, by the marriage which he had made in May, 1770, between the young Dauphin, a mere boy, to one of Maria Theresa's many daughters, Marie Antoinette, a girl of fourteen ? Had it not been for the fact that the Court intrigues had provided Louis with his du Barry, Choiseul would have given this child—or another of the blonde angels whom the Empress offered—to the King himself. The matter had been discussed.

The Comte Jean du Barry was, however, already saying, " If only my brother would die, I would make the King marry his wife ; it would not take long. Did not Louis XIV. marry that old bigoted prude Madame de Maintenon ? I should have the pleasure of giving to a King my mistress as a wife—that would be piquant ! "

Such an event would not have been impossible, but, in any case, the King was too pleased with his Mademoiselle Lange to wish to change her for one of Maria Theresa's daughters. Choiseul accordingly married the King's grandson to one of them instead, and imagined that he had rendered himself invulnerable in so doing. He might, however, have read a sign of the times when, immediately after the Austrian marriage, his sister the Duchesse de Grammont was exiled from the Court. She had made herself so offensive by her outrageous abuse, and the songs which she caused to be circulated against the King and his mistress, that Madame du Barry had no difficulty in causing her abrupt dismissal. One

of these songs commenced, "*La belle Bourbonnaise, la maîtresse de Blaise,*" and was, like all the rest, scurrilous to a degree.

Louis was well aware that the Duc de Choiseul connived with his sister in causing the publication of these ribald ballads ; but the way in which Madame du Barry eventually contrived to get rid of her enemy was by telling the King that he would certainly cause a new war with England. The mistress proposed that Choiseul should be replaced by either the Duc de Richelieu or d'Aiguillon as Minister, neither of whom were in favour of such a ruinous step for France, one, too, which the King dreaded above all else. Louis declined to accept Richelieu, telling his mistress, and with reason, that he was more fitted to conduct an amorous intrigue than to lead the counsels of the nation. But he agreed to accept the Maréchal's nephew d'Aiguillon, and, when all was arranged to his mistress's satisfaction, astounded the Duc de Choiseul by an abrupt letter exiling him to his estate of Chanteloup (December 24th, 1770).

Only a month later Madame du Barry, pushed by the Chancellor Maupeou and the Abbé Terray, encouraged the King to the most violent action of his reign. He was in mortal dread of the Parliament of Paris, from which he had recently carried off the papers accusing the Duc d'Aiguillon of forgery in the case of the imprisonment of the Breton Procureur-Général, la Chalotais. The giddy young woman, who knew nothing of politics or history, merely followed her instructions when, pointing to a picture of Charles I., she said familiarly, "France ! thy Parliament will cut off thy head also ! "

The shot went home. In the night of January 20th,

1771, the King caused all the members of the Parliament to be seized in their beds; when the greater majority, refusing to comply with the King's will, were hurried off into exile. In this manner did the new mistress get rid of the most powerful Minister of the reign, and at the same time the turbulent Parliament with which he was on such excellent terms.

CHAPTER XXII

The Strange Habits of Versailles

1770 AND LATER

NOTHING was more disgraceful than the spectacle offered at the Court after the ascendancy of Madame du Barry was definitely assured. The Princes of the Blood, who had been temporarily exiled on account of their too plainly marked disapprobation of the King's violent action towards the Parliament, returned to Versailles, where they vied with the other nobles in their adulation of the King's mistress.

Each one seemed to consider it an honour to be admitted to the intimacy of the low-born Sultana, the Prince de Conti in particular showing his zeal. At the representation of plays in which there might be any phrases or couplets intended to flatter the favourite, this Prince would applaud such expressions frantically. He would be rewarded by " la du Barry " with an amicable sign of the hand, while the King threw upon his kinsman a glance of complaisance and satisfaction. There is no wonder if the girl, originally nothing but a street-walker, had her head completely turned when she saw even Royal Princes thus at her feet.

Although without any pride at her first elevation, when she found her overtures of friendship rejected by

the King's daughters and the young Austrian Dauphine, she commenced to give herself airs. Passing one day through the courtyard at Fontainebleau she heard violent laughter from one of the windows. Looking up, she saw Madame Adélaïde and Marie Antoinette affecting to laugh to fits. Unabashed, Madame du Barry stopped with a haughty stare, fixing the Princesses with her eyes until they were obliged to give way and retire from the window. At the Opera she determined to eclipse the Dauphine, and had her box just above that of the wife of the heir to the crown. Here she appeared with her Court robe bedizened with diamonds to an extent entirely to throw those of Marie Antoinette into the shade.

At the Court the King became a sort of phantom—each Minister on good terms with the Comtesse was more King than he, while the great noblemen who held charges at Versailles openly scouted his authority. All were anxious, in the reign of pillage which was shamelessly allowed to continue, to keep the favourite in her position, and, with this object in view, the abandoned courtiers did not hesitate to remind Madame du Barry that "toujours perdrix" had never been a maxim of Louis XV., that he liked to vary his pleasures, and that it was merely by pandering to his dissolute habits that Madame de Pompadour had succeeded in maintaining herself in power.

Madame du Barry took the hint; she had, by her marriage, become the aunt of a young lady named Mademoiselle de Tournon. She gave this niece to the King, and without jealousy saw her pass into the Monarch's seraglio. Far from being jealous, du Barry showed the girl the greatest friendship and helped to make her fortune.

In the dreadful school in which she had been brought up infidelities of this kind passed for nothing, and, good-natured as she was, without any of the more refined and cultured feelings which Pompadour had possessed, if she could only please Louis she herself was happy. The King, in turn, only showed her the more affection, and vowed that she surpassed all women whom he had ever known.

While the Monarch, at the age of sixty, was publicly giving such a degraded spectacle of vice to his subjects, he rarely took the trouble to see that his orders were obeyed, or that any marks of his favour which he had accorded were actually granted. In the same way as the Ministers caused him blindly to sign the most absurd and tyrannical edicts, according to their own will, not his, so was it also in the case of rewards and pensions.

For example, the Sieur de Boiscaillau, Surgeon of the Armies, presented to the King an account of some sums that had long been owing to him by the State. Louis was so surprised to find these amounts had not been paid that, in his own hand, he wrote at the foot of the account: "In less than a month my Controleur-Général will pay these sums to Boiscaillau. They are certainly due to him, and he has much need of them."

The surgeon, after great difficulty, gained access to the Abbé Terray, the Controleur-Général des Finances. When he presented his paper, Terray flung it back at him.

"But, Monseigneur! when can I be paid?"

"Never!"

"But, Monseigneur, the King's order?"

"It is not mine."

"And his Majesty?"

"Let him pay you, since you ask him, and get out of here, quick!" said the "Exterminator-General," "for I have no time to be troubled with you any longer."

Boiscaillau then went to the Captain of the Guards, who hustled him out, and from him to the Duc de Richelieu, as it was still Richelieu's year of service as First Gentleman of the Chamber. Being unable to see the Duc, he begged his secretary to ask the Maréchal to give him a new memorandum to the King. At the same time, he showed him that upon which His Majesty had already written. The secretary was new in his place, and did not yet understand the habits of the Court. He was impressed with the King's signature and promised the Surgeon of the Armies that he would make matters all right for him. Repairing to the Maréchal, he told him, naïvely, that the Abbé Terray had just done a thing which would make the King very angry if he should hear of it. Thereupon Richelieu laughed in his face, called him a great fool, and said that he evidently had yet to learn that the worst protection was that of the King. "Since the Abbé has declared himself," continued the Duc, "you can go to Boiscaillau and tell him that he will get nothing, and do not mix yourself up any more in such affairs!"

The example of this insolent behaviour of the Ministers was followed by the head clerks, or by any Jack-in-office. During the year on duty as First Gentleman of the Chamber of the Duc d'Aumont, the King, being very pleased with Armand, a celebrated comedian of the Comédie Française, called him to him at the theatre and said, "Armand, I make you a grant of a pension of a hundred pistoles yearly."

At the end of the year Armand presented himself at

the Treasury, with a receipt for his pension already signed, and asked for his cash. The clerks all knew him, they received him kindly but could not pay him, as his name was not on their list.

Very much surprised at this refusal, the actor repaired to the Duc d'Aumont, who had been with the King when he promised the pension.

"You are a rascal!" exclaimed the First Gentleman. "Be good enough to learn that it is I only who can grant you a pension; what the King says to you and nothing are exactly the same thing! Do not importune me—you will never get anything."

Armand next contrived to inform the King of what had happened, when Louis remarked, "Why, certainly, I accorded him a pension. Let him arrange matters with M. d'Aumont." For a year or two now the unfortunate comedian waited for his pension in vain, and might have waited for ever but for the fact that he was on excellent terms with Mademoiselle Clairon, the great actress. She was a very handsome young lady, whose favours were eagerly sought by the Duc d'Aumont. While according to the Duc the happiness which he so ardently desired, Clairon made a stipulation in favour of her comrade, Armand. The Duc arranged the matter at once! Thus, owing to the consideration of a pretty actress, Armand obtained that which the King's promise was valueless to procure.

In some cases not even the power of King, Minister, and First Gentleman combined could suffice to ensure payment of a pension, when a stubborn clerk stood in the way. One such is as follows.

It was customary to give a pension of 600 livres to the senior *valet de chambre* who had charge of the

clocks at Versailles. The *doyen valet de chambre horlogier* of the King dying, His Majesty said to Pelletier, who had become doyen by seniority, "You are to have the pension."

Being directly under the orders of the First Gentleman of the Chamber, Pelletier went to him and asked him to agree to this award, which he was pleased to do. He even went further, taking the trouble to write to M. Amelot, then the Minister responsible. Amelot got the King to give orders for the forwarding of the necessary brevet, but Pelletier waited in vain for his money. He had unfortunately neglected to engage the good offices of the *échevin*, or First Clerk of the King's Household. This happened to be a person eaten up with his own importance, and the brevet was not forwarded. Six months passed on to a year, and still the necessary document was not forthcoming.

Once again the First Gentleman wrote to the Minister, but he, being ruled by his head clerks, felt himself unable to take any definite action at which they were likely to take umbrage. For the *échevin* was implacable, he had been wounded in his *amour-propre*, and was determined to show what an important man he was. The Minister found him determined not to give way, and therefore could only inform the First Gentleman that he was very sorry, but he could do nothing.

The doyen of the *valets de chambre* of the clocks was in despair, and constantly repaired with his grievance to the First Gentleman on duty for the year. In the third year the great noble holding this very high rank who happened to be on duty determined to put his pride in his pocket and see if he could not obtain the long-delayed pension for his unfortunate subordinate.

Accordingly, he condescended to pay a personal visit to the First Clerk of the King's Household, and to beg him, for mercy's sake, to make an end of the business.

Thereupon the haughty *échevin*, mollified and flattered by this step, ceased his obstruction. The brevet, which should have been forwarded at the latest in a month after the King first granted the pension, arrived, and Pelletier received his promised allowance. He did not, however, obtain his back pay for the years which were lost.

Such is a sample of the way in which affairs were conducted at Versailles, and it is enough to show to how great an extent the King was treated as a nonentity in his own Court.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Dauphin and Marie Antoinette

1770—1774

When the Duc de Choiseul was, so to speak, *in extremis*, in May, 1770, he had contrived to settle himself for a little longer in his place at the head of affairs by his Austrian marriage. France had lost the East and West Indies, and also America, during the fourteen years in which she had been led by the nose by Austria—working through the agency of a worn-out mistress like Pompadour, a *blasé roué* like Choiseul. Nevertheless, she was now compelled to take a step calculated to cement still closer the alliance with Austria.

While, by the establishment of her daughter Caroline at Naples, Maria Theresa had regained her ascendancy in Italy, she appeared also to take a firmer root than ever in France by the importation to Versailles of a charming young Austrian Princess, one who would rule her husband through his affections.

Owing to the revelations in later years of Arneth, the Archivist of the Court of Vienna, the old romance that Marie Antoinette did not meddle in State affairs has been exploded. It is now only too clearly apparent how she threw her weight into the balance, was always ready at a decisive moment to *exploiter* France for the benefit of Austria. The old Austrian plot, the existence

of which has been so strongly denied by writers of great authority, became only too evident when, by the publication of the actual letters of Maria Theresa and her daughter, the violent action of the former upon the latter stood revealed.

All that interested writers—like Madame Campan, in her *Vie privée de Marie Antoinette*—tell us, to excuse the faults of this Princess, by exaggerating the coldness of temperament of the Dauphin, is reduced to nothing by these letters. It is true that he viewed his young spouse with suspicion upon her first arrival, and was rather slow in accepting a husband's responsibilities; but already in 1771, when they were still both children, she had obtained a woman's empire over the young Prince.

There was nothing French about Louis XVI. Son of a Saxon mother, in physical aspect he took after the race of the two Electors, Augustus II. and Augustus III., who were Kings of Poland. He was fat and full-blooded, of sanguine temperament, and often choleric. He differed, however, from his debauched Saxon grandfather and great-grandfather by his natural honesty and devotion. These rendered Louis XVI., whether as Dauphin or King, regular in his behaviour, faultless in his family relations with his wife. He was eminently domestic in his habits. With the exception of his very close association with Marie Antoinette, his life was solitary; he preferred the out-of-door existence of the woods at Versailles, Compiègne, or Rambouillet. By this out-of-door life he kept down his stoutness and never resembled his father the Dauphin, who complained at the age of seventeen that he was "unable to drag the mass of his body."

Ardent in the chase in all weathers, at night after a heavy supper he fell asleep from sheer fatigue, not, as has falsely been said, from drunkenness. But he was a man of the wilds with the primitive instincts of the savage—a man of flesh and blood and nought beside. From this is to be explained the condition of dependence upon his wife into which he fell. When already a young man, aged twenty and more, he abandoned himself to violent floods of tears when his wife was likely to become a mother.

A foreigner by birth, the traditions of the Prince were likewise foreign rather than domestic by his religion, by the manner in which he clung to Rome. How the evil-living Louis XV. always fought to maintain the interests of the Church we know, and how much more so that serious Catholic his grandson! For twelve years after his accession Louis XVI. refused civil rights to the Protestants. Not only did he spare but jealously preserved the goods of the Church, and preferred to rush headlong to his own ruin rather than demand from the clergy a purely political oath which could in no way wound its religious faith.

Entirely different was the Dauphine. Throughout her career we see nothing in Marie Antoinette of any leaning towards either the world of philosophy or the world of religion. Her only religion was her family. Notwithstanding her passionate servitude to Madame de Polignac, which seemed to lead her away from Vienna, a word from her mother or her brother was ever sufficient to show that which was at the bottom—entire devotion to Austrian interests.

The letters published by Arneth reveal clearly the sinister influence of Maria Theresa over her daughter.

From a mezzotint after the picture by J. Michmidetz.

MARIE ANTOINETTE.
As Dauphine.

The counsels which she gives Marie Antoinette regarding her behaviour in her private life are well enough, but as Queen she corrupts her, demanding from her everything calculated to bring about her downfall. In the gravest moments, with heavy and indefatigable insistence, with prayers which go as far as tears, she makes of her daughter that which her young husband feared from the first, a veritable spy in the Austrian interests. Although a bigoted woman, there was absolute immorality in the manner in which Maria Theresa speculated upon her daughter's motherhood, by means of which her husband was reduced to a condition of absolute slavery. The details are given by the Archivist of the Court of Vienna. They are shameful and repugnant—but thoroughly authentic.

Owing to the manner in which the old woman in Vienna selfishly made use of her daughter for her own political ends, she can most assuredly be accused of having been the principal cause which brought this giddy woman to the guillotine. At times she even wilfully deceived Marie Antoinette—lied to her! For instance, on May 4th, 1772, she wrote to the Dauphine that people calumniated her in saying that she was allying herself to Russia, whereas, in fact, Maria Theresa had already, on March 4th, signed with Russia the treaty for the division of Poland. Thus she wilfully made use of her child as an agent for the deception of her husband, of his grandfather Louis XV., and the whole French nation! No wonder if, when the real facts became known, the husband was all the more convinced that his wife was—as he had been told when she was selected for him by Choiseul, whom he detested—the mere secret agent and spy of her mother.

Louis the Dauphin was married, at the age of sixteen, against his inclinations, and the young girl his bride came when no one wanted her. An eye-witness, the Abbé Vermond, her preceptor, has told us that on both sides there was a mortal frost, strange between such young people. The aunts of the Dauphin had told the young man that she came as a spy for her mother, and this accounted for the coldness on the part of the Prince.

Before she had left Vienna, Maria Theresa had done for Marie Antoinette that which she had already done for Caroline on sending her to Naples, instructed her most carefully as to her future behaviour. During the last months before leaving she made her daughter sleep in her room, filling her with fears and telling her what a terrible country was France, instructing her as to the precautions which she was to take, and generally filling her head with suspicion of the Court to which she was proceeding.

Upon arrival, the girl of fourteen was much frightened, especially of the Dauphin, and would not allow the Abbé Vermond to leave her side. This terrible Dauphin—a rosy young fellow of German aspect—was quite as much embarrassed as herself. Upon the morrow of her arrival at Versailles, in the morning, he entered her room. "Have you slept?" he inquired of Marie Antoinette. "Yes," she replied. That was all the conversation; the Dauphin then left.

She showed the greatest mistrust in her actions. Not considering it safe to leave her mother's letters locked up, she hid them in her bed, from which behaviour great secrets were imagined. Those which she wished to send she only wrote on the day the courier left from the Austrian Embassy, and, after carefully

sealing them, sent them at the last moment direct to Mercy, the Ambassador.

While the Dauphin was a German in appearance and temperament, the young girl was a Frenchwoman, or at all events a Lorrainer. Her father, Duke Francis of Lorraine, who became Emperor, remained a Frenchman in tongue all his life; he never learned to speak German properly. He was the nephew of Philippe d'Orléans, and, from his love of pleasure, greatly resembled the good-natured and immoral "Regent of the Roués." In this lightness of character his daughter resembled the Emperor, and very soon her frivolities gave rise to unlimited scandal.

No sooner had she arrived, however, than, owing to the maladroit behaviour of her mother, the young Dauphine found herself involved in a quarrel with all the great nobilities of France, whose empty heads were far more taken up with questions of precedence and rank than the gravest affairs of State.

The Empress demanded from Louis XV. that Mademoiselle de Lorraine, a relative of the late Emperor, should dance at the fêtes directly after the Princes of the Blood—the Condés and Contis. Thus the great ducal families of Bouillon, Rohan, and others, some of which had also Royal blood in their veins, were obliged to fall into the background. There was the greatest excitement over this affair. In spite of the discontent of the nobility, the King decided that Mademoiselle de Lorraine should take precedence, as requested by the Empress—the obloquy for which unpopular decision fell upon the young Austrian Princess, who in consequence felt almost as though she had fallen into an enemy's country.

The amicable and vivacious young girl, however, found herself well welcomed by the King's daughters. As, of these, Madame Victoire especially had a good heart, Marie Antoinette went to visit her two or three times a day, and met the Dauphin in his sisters' society. Maria Theresa, however, was now guilty of another act of folly. She looked upon Mesdames as suspicious, as not sufficiently in the Austrian interests, therefore wrote to discourage these visits. The result of this was that Marie Antoinette followed the bent of her own inclinations in the society of young and frivolous women of the Court, who could not teach her anything good. For keeping this society the foolish old Empress blamed her also; but too late—she herself had driven the girl into it, and much evil came of it in the following years.

The old Empress—who, in spite of herself, and in tears, was about joining in the iniquitous partition of Poland, being afraid of the bitter remonstrances of France—wished Marie Antoinette to be, at all events, civil to Madame du Barry. But this she found she was unable to be without annoying both Mesdames and the Dauphin. In fact, the only bond which united her at first to the Dauphin was their mutual avoidance of the King's mistress, who only wanted the slightest opening to become the Dauphin's most familiar friend.

With reference to our mention just above of the fact that Maria Theresa was in tears while participating in the partition of Poland, a cynical remark of the King of Prussia is worth recording. "She weeps a great deal," said Frederick the Great, "but the more she weeps the more she helps herself."

During the first two years after her arrival at Ver-

sailles Marie Antoinette improved very greatly in appearance. She became much stouter—a woman, in fact—and had a beautiful skin. Her splendour was that of the *beauté rousse* type, her hair being ruddy brown or auburn. This was a type considered disgraceful in Spain ; so much so that the first wife of the Dauphin, son of Louis XV., who came from Madrid, dyed her hair, which was of this colour before coming to Versailles. Ferdinand, the third son of Charles III. of Spain, who was now on the throne of the two Sicilies at Naples, made strange accusations against his wife, Caroline, because she too was *une rousse*.

Her sister at Versailles did not escape unpleasant comment. Madame du Barry laughed at Marie Antoinette's warm colouring, while others, more spitefully, made it an excuse to try to set the Dauphin against his bride—telling him what the King of Naples said about Caroline. Fortunately for the Dauphine, she gradually assumed more the type of a brunette.

During the first year after the marriage la Vauguyon, the Dauphin's Governor, kept the young couple apart. Owing to the repeated instances of Maria Theresa, her daughter then made the first advances towards her boy-husband—and married life commenced. The Empress was excessively anxious that before she should make known how deeply she stood committed with Prussia and Russia the news might arrive that an heir was to be expected. She moans in every letter that there is no such intelligence, and it is in consequence of these complaints that Marie Antoinette is found making an effort to overcome the early repugnance which she feels for the Dauphin, and asking him to lead a life in common. At length, upon December 18th, 1771, the obedient

daughter is to be found writing to Vienna that she thinks that she is able to impart the required good news. In the following July her mother, much reassured, openly acknowledged her share in the partition of Poland, which country had, to resist Russian aggression, been occupied by French troops, under Dumouriez and Choisi, even before the marriage of the Dauphin to Marie Antoinette. All of those under Choisi were taken prisoners by General Suwarrow, and the fate of Poland was decided without the impotent efforts of France in her favour weighing for an instant in the balance.

The little boy who became the titular Louis XVII. was not by any means the eldest child of the Dauphine. He was not born until March 27th, 1785, and was called at first the Duc de Normandie. Two brothers had preceded him as Dauphin, which title fell to this child, who perished miserably in the Temple when ten years old, only after the death of Louis Joseph on June 4th, 1789. Whether the child whom Marie Antoinette wrote to her mother that she thought she expected in December, 1771, ever saw the light or no, the author of these pages has been unable to discover. All that was necessary to Maria Theresa was the fact of its expected arrival, before the inevitable displeasure of France, caused by the defection of Austria, should become manifest.

It must be admitted that the young Dauphine had all the merit of obedience, for all of her tastes divided her from the Dauphin. While he was studious and serious, secretly applying himself, in spite of his grandfather Louis XV., to the study of both military and State affairs, the Dauphine had no inclination to study whatever. Her mother had entirely neglected her education until she was nearly thirteen. Then, when Marie

From a mezzotint.

LOUIS XVI.
As Dauphin.

Lesczynska died in 1768, Maria Theresa thought of making her Queen of France by marrying her to Louis XV., then aged fifty-eight. Accordingly the twelve-year-old girl was furnished with all kinds of masters at once, but learned nothing from any of them. Drawings which were exhibited as hers were not by her hand at all.

Although accompanied to France by her preceptor, the Abbé Vermond, after her arrival at Versailles Marie Antoinette was too careless and too vain to apply herself. She preferred the frivolous amusements and gaieties of the place, especially so after the heavy Court of Vienna. Vermond wrote to her mother an account of the girl's disinclination to work at anything, and Maria Theresa in turn lectured her, fruitlessly. On January 6th, 1771, Maria Theresa wrote as follows: "Reading is more necessary for you than any one, as you have neither acquired music, drawing, dancing, painting, nor anything else."

One taste she possessed strongly, that of acting in theatricals, especially in comedies of by no means the most refined description. At the same time, freed from the ponderous etiquette of her mother's Court, she snapped her fingers at that of Versailles. There, with a King ruled by a woman of the lowest origin, Marie Antoinette considered etiquette entirely out of place. She laughed at the King with her ladies, laughed at the Dauphin also, and was never so happy as when riding about on a donkey like a tomboy, with her madcap young brother-in-law, the Comte d'Artois. The more often she fell off, the more she laughed. The very first elements of anything serious were not to be found in Marie Antoinette. This very lack of seriousness, however, made the young Princess charming and natural. Nor was she without

good-heartedness or incapable of being touched. When the people cheered her and the Dauphin in June, 1773, she was much affected, and wrote to Vienna: "Nothing is so precious as the affection of the people! I have felt this, and shall never forget it."

CHAPTER XXIV

Catharine the Murderess, Frederick, and the Polish Partition

1771—1772

It was as early as the year 1764 that the first secret treaty was signed between Frederick the Great and Catharine II. on the subject of Poland.

At the instigation of this Princess of Anhalt Zerbst—whose marriage with Peter III. when Duke of Holstein had been arranged by Frederick II.—her husband was murdered by her favourite Orloff and the Russian Guards in 1762. The excuse given for the murder was that he was too wildly devoted to Frederick the Great, that his efforts in imitating him in the matter of discipline would end by Prussianising the Russian army.

The intense admiration shown for himself and his methods by the young Czar, while enabling Frederick to come out of the Seven Years' War with no loss of territory, by the conclusion of the Peace of Hubertsburg after Peter's murder, was, before that event, a matter of some embarrassment to the Prussian King. Peter III., who considered himself aggrieved in the matter of Holstein by the King of Denmark, was anxious to march all the armies which had lately visited Berlin as foes once more through Prussian territory. but as friends. Frederick

wanted no more Russian troops in his country, no matter in what guise they might come. He had had far more than enough of them. He therefore astutely suggested to Peter that affairs in Poland were far more interesting than those in Denmark. Peter affectionately thanked his Prussian friend for his kind advice, and had commenced to look the other way accordingly, when—under circumstances of peculiar barbarity—Catharine murdered him.

In the history of the world there has never figured, while at the zenith of power, a woman with a more bestial nature than Catharine II. of Russia. The Duchesse de Berry, daughter of the Regent d'Orléans, was bad enough, but she was young. Had she not died when but twenty-four, she might have improved. In our own times we have seen a Queen of Spain of such unbridled habits that after being very properly ejected from the Peninsula, she has continued in her old age a career in Paris such as to make her presence in France an acknowledged scandal to the country. But never in the annals of Europe has there appeared anything so depraved as the female minotaur who in 1762, as the result of a brutal crime, ascended the Russian throne. What Louis XV. was as a man, such was Catharine II. as a woman. Not contented with making lovers of many of her courtiers, to a period long after age had whitened her hair, this abominable creature was far too intimate with numerous private soldiers, selected from her grenadiers.

Catharine was but a Russified German, but Elizabeth, who had for twenty years preceded her on the throne, dying in 1762, was but little less depraved, while being less educated and less hypocritical. She had before

Catharine, as Frederick had realised to his cost, but too barbarously expressed the appetite of Russia.

Open-mouthed, for long past, had the Muscovite monster looked toward the west in search of prey. Hungry for Turkey, hungry for Poland, hungry for Prussia, likewise for the Germany of the Empire, its jaws were to be heard snapping beyond the circle of the Baltic—to Sweden, to Denmark, and to Holstein.

It was, however, more towards Denmark, Holstein, and especially Prussia, than to Poland, that the eyes of the hungry Russian dragon were directed, and the Prussian King was aware of this. Frederick in his earlier days was, he knew, as naught but a fly or a frog, which by one snap could be swallowed up wholesale. Notwithstanding this knowledge, in the year 1755, when the Russians were being called into Europe, Frederick boldly constituted himself the guardian of the West. "Stand back!" cried the hero. "You will not enter into the Empire!" And he proceeded to make good his words.

The crime of the reign of this great man was initiated when he first said to Peter of Holstein-Gottorp, the grandson of Peter the Great, "Poland is an appetising morsel, why not look that way?" In six months, however, his friend Peter was strangled, and the Prussian had to reckon with the hypocritical Catharine, who—with crocodile tears—had assured her husband's Guards that if they did not kill their Monarch he would forcibly convert them into Lutherans. By thus representing Peter III. as a tyrant likely to prove the oppressor of the Greek Church, Catharine mounted to the throne upon the shoulders of the popes—the Russian clergy.

No sooner had she settled herself into her seat than,

with an impudent disregard of the popes, she declared herself a Philosopher, sent for Voltaire, d'Alembert, and Diderot, begging them to come and establish themselves at her Court, with princely pensions. Voltaire, flattered and deceived by the woman, hung the portrait which she sent him in his bedroom at Ferney. D'Alembert exchanged friendly letters, but was surprised when Catharine refused, at his request, to set at liberty the French soldiers taken by Suwarrow. Diderot sold her his library—of which she allowed him the use for life—and went to pay her a visit for several months at St. Petersburg. While making to d'Alembert the most splendid offers to undertake the education of her son, and appealing to the heart of Voltaire by sending him gifts for his *protégés* the oppressed family of Calas, this murderess of Peter III. openly proclaimed Prussia as "the hereditary enemy of Russia."

Frederick was also of the band of the Philosophers, and it did not take his philosophy long to decide that something must be done to avert another war. Since, in 1740, the stout and studious young man had astonished Europe by his sudden irruption into Silesia, he had ridden about Europe sword in hand for twenty-three years, and been present in about as many big battles. Therefore, although armed to the teeth and stronger than he had ever been, he had no desire to treat the Russians to another Zorndorf—a battle fought on Prussian soil in 1758, in which he destroyed 22,000 of the Muscovite invaders. The battle had cost him 11,000 of his own men, and he wished now to preserve as many of his subjects as possible to till the land and follow the arts of peace.

While seeking to avert another war which might

diminish his possessions, the great Frederick came to the conclusion that it would be sound policy to do so, if possible, in a manner which should improve and round off his dominions by the addition of a slice of territory which should include the port of Dantzic. Although later Great Britain, from commercial jealousy, tried to prevent Russia from allowing Frederick to annex Dantzic, English sympathies were by no means on the side of the Poles, owing to the intolerance shown to the Protestants by the preponderating Catholic population.

In declaring their independence, the Confederates of Bar all too violently waved the banner of the Church. The result was that George III. not only did nothing to prevent the dismemberment of Poland, but actually aided it, by sending his fleets to block in their harbours the French squadrons which the Duc d'Aiguillon had prepared to send to the Baltic. There was no declaration of war with France, nor any blows struck between the two countries; but this action on the part of the British warships only too clearly showed how the political annihilation of Louis XV. in Europe had been completed by the dismissal of the Duc de Choiseul.

The plan concocted between Frederick and Catharine was before long made acceptable to the youthful ambition of the Emperor Joseph II., the son of Maria Theresa. Nor would the timorous jealousy of the old Empress allow her to remain without taking her share in the spoils, her lifelong hatred of Frederick having become equalled by her fears of having as a neighbour that Russia which had been her recent ally against the Prussian King.

Negotiations for peace with the Turks, whom Choiseul had stirred up to assist the Catholic Poles against Russian

oppression, became the pretext for war indemnities. The vanquished Poles had to pay the whole of them.

While this was decided, Frederick wrote to Count Solms, his Ambassador at St. Petersburg, "I shall not enter upon that portion which Russia marks out for herself. I have expressly left all that blank in order that she may settle it according to her interests and her own good pleasure. When the negotiations for peace have advanced to a certain stage of consistency, it will no longer depend upon the Austrians to break them off if we declare our views unanimously as to Poland. She cannot rely any further upon France, which happens to be in such a fearful state of exhaustion that it could not even give any help to Spain, which was on the point of declaring war against England. If that war does not take place, it must simply be attributed to the smash up in the finances of France. I guarantee, then, to the Russians all that may happen to suit them; they will do as much for me; and supposing that the Austrians should consider their share of Poland too paltry in comparison with ours and it were desirable to satisfy them, one would only have to offer them that strip of the Venetian dominions which cuts them off from Trieste in order to keep them quiet."

The wily Frederick, who, after being himself hunted about by France, Austria, and Russia combined, can talk so complacently about giving away strips of Venetia here and blocks of Poland there, concludes his letter with a pregnant phrase, which more than all else reveals to us the utter extent of exhaustion to which Austria as well as France had been reduced by the Seven Years' War. It shows so clearly that little Prussia had herself emerged so much strengthened from the colossal contest

that Frederick can now afford to snap his fingers in derision at the supposed two greatest Powers on the Continent, still nominally in the closest alliance. "Even if the Austrians were to turn nasty, I will answer for it with my head that our union with Russia, once clearly established, will tide them over all that we desire. They have to do with two Powers—and they have not a single ally to give them a shoulder."

Later on the Prussian King again laughs at the weakness of France—this is when England has shown signs of discontent at the partition, and, like France, has sought to induce Maria Theresa to withdraw her already extended hand from the spoils. "The chief points from which their support should come are altogether in France, and there is neither system, nor money, nor stability there. Her projects appear to me, moreover, like the projects of the Duc d'Aiguillon, ebullitions of French vivacity." And once again he tells his Ambassador Solms, "I merely tell you about the impotent efforts of the envy of the French Ministry just to have a laugh at them, and to let you see in what visions the consciousness of its own weakness is capable of leading that Court to indulge."

This, then, was what the Austrian policy of Versailles—inaugurated by Cardinal Fleury nearly forty years earlier—had resulted in! Knowing as we do how good a Frenchman was Frederick as a young man, we can the more realise the continued and stupendous stupidity of Louis XV. and his family, by which they had turned the once staunch friend into a gibing, mocking, and complacently triumphant foe.

It was actually Prince Kaunitz—another former admirer of all things French and the friend of Pompa-

dour—who drew up the treaty of partition, to which the Diet of Warsaw itself consented, owing to the presence of the armies of the three contracting Powers in the neighbourhood.

Russia took by far the largest share of Poland, Maria Theresa a very big slice, and Frederick the smallest portion; but it was that which suited himself and neatly rounded off his Kingdom of Prussia.

CHAPTER XXV

Death Scenes of le Bien-Aimé

1774

ACTUM est de Francia! It is all up with France and Louis XV.! To the very last the King continued his hoggish career, and when he died left to his grandson and his country the bloody legacy of the Revolution. For this the fourth of the Bourbons had been industriously preparing during his reign of fifty-nine disgraceful years. He had, it is true, only helped to pile up the agony, since before him for seventy-two years his great-grandfather Louis XIV. was also diligently employed in building up the pyramid of woe, which—balanced upside-down as it was—remained bolstered up for nearly nine years under the Regent.

Now all that remained to be done was for the giddy and unfortunate Marie Antoinette to add her fragile weight to one of the upper edges of the inverted pyramid of folly and oppression, to bring down, with a crash, the whole unwieldy structure, erected upon such false and impossible principles of architecture. The only marvel is that the clumsy and incongruous edifice contrived to preserve its balance for so long.

No man ever feared death more than the religious Louis XV., and he always showed the greatest concern

for those of his courtiers who died without previous confession. Should any of these have confessed before death overtook them, the King viewed their passing with equanimity. Shortly before he was seized with his last illness Louis suffered several severe shocks. Sorba, the Genoese Ambassador, died suddenly; the Marquis de Chauvelin, a companion of his debauches, fell dead at his feet when they were playing cards together; and the Maréchal d'Armentières died suddenly also. Another shock was when the Abbé de la Ville, who had come to thank the King for giving him a place in the Foreign Office, was attacked by apoplexy in his presence, and died shortly afterwards. Louis himself narrowly escaped death at about the same time—when out hunting in the forest at Compiègne—a flash of lightning striking a tree close by his side.

All of these events had caused the King to fall into a condition of melancholy to which he was often prone, and of this the priests, who were anxious to cause a cessation of the life which he was leading with Madame du Barry, took advantage. Hoping to induce Louis to send away his mistress, the Abbé de Beauvais, preaching at the Court, addressed the King personally, with the words, "Yet another forty days, Sire, and Nineveh will be destroyed!"

The King became more alarmed than ever, and frequently remarked to the Duc de Richelieu, "I wish that the accursed forty days were past! I shall never be happy until then." He died on the fortieth day after the Abbé's fulmination.

At the same time Madame du Barry had her downfall prophesied. The *Almanach de Liège* announced that in the month of April, 1774, "a lady who was the

greatest favourite would have played her last rôle." Du Barry was seldom anything but gay, but this prophecy frightened her, and she said, " I, too, should indeed be glad to see this horrid month of April finished."

In order to draw the King from the melancholy into which he had fallen, several of the infamous du Barrys, and other evil companions, organised an orgie in company with some young peasant girls in the château of the Trianon. From one of these, who was suffering from a commencement of smallpox, the King contracted the disease.

The handsome young creature, who was probably feeling ill, evinced the greatest disinclination to receiving the caresses of the Monarch, and begged him not to approach her. Relentlessly disregarding her remonstrances, the old debauchee paid the penalty of his iniquity.

Louis was now sixty-four years of age, and his constitution already debilitated. A malignant fever was apparent upon April 29th, and on the following day the Archbishop of Paris presented himself at Versailles; and before his presence Madame du Barry eclipsed herself.

Then was to be seen a curious sight in the Royal apartments. For fear of the sick King being frightened at the appearance of the Archbishop, the party of the *dévots*—consisting of the Bishop de Senlis, Madame Adélaïde, the Duc d'Aumont, and the atheistical Duc de Richelieu—opposed the prelate's entrance. They only eventually allowed de Beaumont to enter upon his promising not to talk about the administration of the Sacraments. When he entered, the King would not pay any attention to him.

The sickness increasing, Louis alternately turned his thoughts to religion and Madame du Barry—sending for this latter occasionally, keeping her with him for a time, and then reluctantly sending her away again. Neither this woman—who displayed such a pitiable exhibition of terror when dragged to the guillotine in 1793—nor any of the Princesses, Mesdames Adélaïde, Victoire, and Louise, showed any fear of the terrible disease, but all alike fearlessly ran the risk of infection. The Archbishop at length, ashamed of his first defeat, reappeared, determined to insist upon confessing the King and administering the Sacraments.

The same struggle took place as before. This time the atheist Richelieu headed the party of the *dévots*, and, opposing the entrance of de Beaumont, said to him irreverently, " Monseigneur, if you must have a man to confess, take me : here I am ! I will tell you some fine stories."

The Archbishop, himself fearing to terrify into his grave a King so useful to the cause of religion, once more retired ; but Louis, feeling his end approaching a day or two later, caused him to be sent for. First, however, he begged the Duchesse d'Aiguillon to take the Comtesse du Barry quietly away with her to her house at Ruelle, to avoid, he said, a repetition of the scenes during his severe illness at Metz, when the priests had insisted upon the public and scandalous sending away of the Duchesse de Châteauroux. No sooner had the King's mistress departed, than he constantly begged for her to be brought back once more. She was, however, refused to him.

Meanwhile, the Duc de la Vrillière had caused the opening and exposure of the ancient relic in the shrine

at the church of Sainte Geneviève, in order that the good people of Paris might pray over the relic for the recovery of the King. The people, however, who had filled the churches and given to Louis the name of "le Bien-Aimé" in 1744, hated him in 1774, and but very few took advantage of the opening of the sacred *châsse*. On the day after the King's decease the Abbé of Sainte Geneviève made a famous *bon mot*. He was being laughed at for the non-success of the holy relic, when he replied, "What right have you to complain of it? Is he not dead?"

It was upon May 7th, 1774, that the King—but only after considerable argument with his chief surgeon, Lamartine—decided at last that it was time to confess and receive the Sacraments. Louis was granted absolution from the lips of the Abbé Maudoux, after which, his soul feeling at repose, the Sacraments, after first being administered to the Royal Family at the foot of the stairs, were taken to the dying King.

After the administration the repentant Monarch called his Grand Almoner to him, who, by his orders, made the following declaration to all within hearing: "Although His Majesty is answerable to no one, he orders me to declare that he repents of the bad example that he has given to his people. Should the Lord prolong his days, he will employ them in relieving them."

The King's remorse increasing as he was nearing his end, he was constantly sending for the Abbé Maudoux during the last three days of his existence. During this period he contrived to confess no less than nineteen times more.

At the last the dying Louis became exceedingly anxious to receive the Extreme Unction, and accord-

ingly sent repeated messengers for de Beaumont. The Archbishop of Paris, however, kept the moribund Prince waiting for a long time. He was present with many dignitaries of the Church at Sainte Geneviève, where—for two hours—the priests remained hotly debating whether they should be robed in black or violet coats to kiss the relic!

It was three days after the King's public declaration of his repentance when, on May 10th, 1774, his people were indeed relieved by the joyful intelligence that their "Well-Beloved" Monarch was no more.

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